

A Necromancer's Wild Card

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Arisato Minato knew he lived an unusual life when he died. But he never thought he would be resurrected by a self-mute necromancer! Now he's a zombie and a servant of the necromancer who revived him? And Magical Garment Girls and vampire ninjas actually exist? Wasn't his life unusual enough already? AU.

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Vanishing Dread

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Chapter 1: Vanishing Dread

"Memento mori." — Unknown

"I used to take life for granted. But ironically, once I died, I could finally appreciate what it means to live... Thank you. You see, you actually changed my life for the better by taking it." — Aikawa Ayumu

January 31st, 2010

"This is it. Today's the day..." Minato said solemnly, standing in the middle of his room in the Iwatodai Dormitory.

It was here. The promised day had arrived. Nyx, the personification of death itself, will descend to Earth like Ryoji prognosticated a month ago on New Year's Eve. If SEES couldn't stop her at the top of Tartarus during the Dark Hour tonight, it would all be over. Humanity would cease to exist as everyone will die, executing basically the end of the world. And the kicker? Many people actually wished for that to happen. There was even a bloody doomsday cult that supported Nyx at the moment, regarding and praising her as "Nyx-sama"!

Minato still couldn't comprehend Mitsuru-senpai's grandfather's resolution to instigate the Fall. Why did he want to bring it about? Desiring to wipe out all of mankind, was he just flat-out insane? Or

was there a deeper reason behind it?

'Who knows? Maybe he was a woobie,' Minato pondered.

Ending his train of thoughts, he placed his headphones on his ears and turned up his mp3 player's volume, listening to *Burn My Dread* in all its glory. It could have been the last chance he had to listen to music. Might as well enjoy it while he could. He left his room and went downstairs to the first floor of the dormitory. Not surprisingly, his friends were nowhere to be seen. It was early in the morning.

Minato went to make some toast for himself. As his small breakfast was being prepared, he thought about what he should do today. When the toast became ready, he knew exactly what he wanted to do.

With toast in his mouth, Minato decided to leave the dormitory.

He wanted to take one last look of Iwatodai City before tonight.

Ignoring the myriad of graffiti and preachers of the Fall, Minato thought his walk was pleasant. By the time he realized it, it was already afternoon. He traveled to every place he spent time alone or with people he had Social Links with. Each place held memories of his time in Iwatodai this past year. He remembered all the times he spent with the friends he made. Memories of laughter, endeavors, and happiness. It was nice taking a trip down memory lane.

Minato went to Naganaki Shrine, Iwatodai Station, Port Island Station, and even Gekkoukan High School to take in the sight of the impressive building. The school was closed today, of course. It was Sunday.

The blue-haired teen went to everywhere except...

"Paulownia Mall," Minato said as he entered the popular hub area. Out of all the places he spent the most time at, this mall took the cake. It was the last place he had yet to visit. That, and he thought he could remain in the mall with the remaining amount of time he

had left before the Dark Hour came. There was always something to do to kill time here.

The floors and walls of Paulownia Mall were still littered with symbols and other miscellaneous crap from Nyx's cult. Ignoring more of the graffiti, Minato took off his headphones and stood in front of the fountain at the center of the mall to consider his options. He looked towards his right and saw the arcade, Game Panic. He thought about going there for a moment before deciding against it. As much as he liked playing games, he didn't feel like playing them today. He faced the north side of the mall and viewed the front of Mandragora, a karaoke bar. Go singing there? Minato rejected the idea of singing on what could potentially be his last day to live, so that wasn't an option. There was Club Escapade, but it only opened during the evening, and he had nothing to do there since that monk he befriended left. He briefly glanced at Aohige Pharmacy, Shinshoudo Antiques, Be Blue V, and the Police Station. Minato and the rest of SEES, however, were already set on their inventory and supplies for today. They had the best of everything in terms of weapons, armor, and tactical items just from exploring Tartarus, fusing Personas with weapons at Shinshoudo Antiques, and doing Elizabeth's quests for the past month.

After eliminating those possibilities, there was only one place left Minato could go to use up the remaining amount of time he had left prior to the Dark Hour tonight: Chagall Cafe. One last taste of Pheromone Coffee didn't sound so bad.

With his hands in his winter clothes, Minato walked over to Chagall Cafe, avoiding the sight of the Lost and random civilians gossiping.

He stopped shortly after passing the fountain.

Between the menu sign of Chagall Cafe and a tree was a young-looking girl sitting by herself on the ground, not looking at anything in particular. Her hair was straight long and silver; her eyes were cerulean like clear skies. She had fair light skin, inadvertently meaning that she wasn't part of the Lost since they were always pale.

Her attire was... unusual, to say the least. She wore a purple dress

with white stripes, but she was also wearing silver armor that consisted of a helmet over her head, a chest plate over her dress, gauntlets and greaves shielding her arms and legs respectively, along with boots. It seemed as if this girl hailed from medieval times.

'Is this girl a cosplayer?' Minato thought, curious about the girl's odd apparel. It was strange to see one at this time of the year, especially with what's been going on as of late.

The girl in question lifted her head up, her blue eyes meeting Minato's gray ones. Her face didn't show any signs of expression. It was just... blank. It made for a pretty good poker face, though, because Minato believed hers rivaled his.

Since he had nothing else to do, Minato decided to strike up a conversation with the girl. He wasn't trying to hit on her. He had a feeling that she was lonely, and he could sympathize with her. He wasn't going to be like Junpei or Akihiko, two of his friends who failed spectacularly at talking to girls.

"Hello. What are you doing sitting here alone?" Minato asked the girl politely, now standing in front of her. Instead of speaking back, she retrieved a notepad and a pen from her dress, and she wrote for a brief moment.

[Who are you?] She asked through words on her notepad. Although he was unsure of why she communicated through writing, Minato rolled with it. He knelt in front of the girl so that they were on the same eye level.

"Well, what kind of person do I look like?" Minato asked calmly, pointing at himself with his index finger. Honestly, it was humorous for him to see what others thought of him at first glance. People he met over the years usually labeled him as "mysterious." It reminded him of the trip to Yakushima in July of last year. That one... "lady" Junpei and Akihiko were trying to hit on described him as such before Minato attempted to set "her" up with Junpei. Oh how it almost worked too...

The silver-haired girl looked at Minato from different angles,

inspecting him so she could describe him. She held her pen to her chin, contemplating and finalizing her thoughts before she wrote on her notepad.

[A mysterious pretty boy.] Sure enough, Minato wasn't surprised. He briefly wondered how many persons in total have replied like that throughout his life. He began to regret that he didn't keep a record for the hell of it.

"There's not a person I haven't met that can describe me without the using word 'mysterious.'" He lightly sighed at the overly-long gag. The girl tapped her pen on her notepad, pointing to the word "pretty." Minato smiled at the compliment.

"My name is Arisato Minato, and thanks for the compliment," Minato thanked. It flattered him when a girl called him pretty. He was getting that a lot this year. Before he could forget, he repeated his question from earlier, "So how come you're sitting here alone?"

[I don't have any money.] The girl glanced to the doors of Chagall Cafe before glancing back to the bluenette in front of her.

"Did you want to drink Pheromone Coffee?" Minato asked. The girl nodded. "In that case, you can come with me, Miss. I'll cover for you." Minato held out his hand towards the silver-haired girl. Her eyes widened slightly when she saw his hand. She looked at the field leader of SEES and saw a small smile on his face.

[Are you sure?] She asked, unsure of herself. He was really going to offer her kindness like this?

"Don't worry, Miss. It won't be any trouble at all. I have a lot of money on me, anyway," Minato stated. He also sweatdropped behind his head. *'Over a million yen, to be honest...'* 500 yen was *hardly* going to make a dent in his personal fortune. Selling weapons, armor, and random junk Shadows dropped and finding money in Tartarus sure helped SEES during their Shadow-exterminating operations. Money really wasn't an issue anymore. Since he was the field leader of SEES, all of the profits went to Minato. Of course, the money was for the benefit of the team for supplies, but the blue-haired teen by himself found most of the stuff

in the first place. Finders, keepers, as the old saying went.

The armored girl looked down for a moment, perhaps thinking of something? She then grasped Minato's hand and nodded, indicating that she would go with him. Minato stood up and pulled the girl up with him.

[Let's go, Minato.] She wrote. The young Wild Card nodded and led her into Chagall Cafe.

"Do you like the taste?" Minato asked the armored girl sitting across from him. He was sitting at his usual spot in Chagall Cafe with her. Other patrons in the cafe were gawking at the two, and it wasn't because of the effects of the Pheromone Coffee. Their Pheromone Coffee had arrived at their table, and the self-mute girl sipped her cup. She then raised her pen to her chin, thinking of what she should write before writing on her notepad.

[It tastes weird.] She responded. Minato smiled a little. [But I like it.]

"That's what I thought too when I started coming here last year," Minato agreed. "When I wasn't working, I would drink Pheromone Coffee in my spare time."

The girl tilted her head. She was confused. It also helped that she wrote a "?" on her notepad to show it.

"Oh. Well, I worked here part-time to earn some money for myself. I'm a high school student, and I live in a dorm. So I thought, 'Why not earn a little extra money on the side?' Even with my academic records, I still probably won't have enough to afford to go to college if I don't save up." Part of what Minato said was true. He mainly worked to increase his courage and charm, but the money was a nice added bonus. With 9,999,999 yen, he could afford to go to some universities without the aid of scholarships.

[What about your parents?] The girl wrote, wondering if Minato's parents weren't supporting him in his studies.

The mention of his parents didn't unnerve Minato. He had accepted

the truth about them years ago, so thinking about them again didn't make him feel sad. He looked down at his own cup of Pheromone Coffee, staring at his reflection in it for a brief moment.

"Well... You see, my parents... They're dead..." Upon finishing that statement, the girl looked visibly shocked. Her eyes widened a greater deal than before. Minato noticed her astonished reaction but still continued. "It was about ten years ago in 1999. There was this... accident on the Moonlight Bridge here in Tatsumi Port Island. My parents died because of it. I was orphaned at that point. Most of my relatives didn't want to take me in to raise me. 'Who would want to raise a traumatized seven-year old?', I heard one of them say. So for the next ten years, I kept moving and transferring to various places to live and go to school. Let me just say that the experience wasn't exactly fun. Although, I did enjoy staying with my grandfather and cousin at their estate. When I came back to Iwatodai City, it was in April of last year. I managed to get transferred into Gekkoukan High School, and I moved into a dorm that housed other students. I've been here ever since," Minato finished. He actually felt a bit better that he confessed. Even though he told a complete stranger his past, he felt better nonetheless.

The girl was looking down into her cup, processing the information she heard.

[I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought up your parents.] She wrote, avoiding Minato's eyes.

Minato shook his head. "It's fine. To be honest, I'm content that I got that off my chest. I never really told anyone about my past. I suppose I've been hiding my dread for the past decade. It's funny, you know? I made friends with people this past year who had problems in their lives, whether they were in the past or in the present. I listened to them and helped them overcome their problems, like I was a psychologist. And now I told you my past. Even though I overcame my issues a long time ago, it's still amusing how the situation has been reversed," he noted. This girl listened to him like he listened to his friends. The quietness and poker face were similar too.

[I'm glad that I could help, then.] The girl replied. Minato nodded.

Then, a thought crossed his mind.

"You know, I never did ask for your name." It just hit him. Minato was socializing with this girl for a decent amount of time, and he had yet to ask for her name. The girl blinked and then wrote.

[My name is Eucliwood Hellscythe.] That was an odd name. It certainly wasn't Japanese. And yet, Minato thought it sounded cute and fitting for her. He also assumed that she wrote her name in the non-Japanese way of stating one's name. If she didn't, then her name was truly an odd one.

"Well, Eucliwood, it's a pleasure to meet you," Minato told her.

[It's nice to meet you too, Minato. You can call me "Eu" for short.] Eucliwood wrote to him. Minato smiled at her. If she was a Social Link, it probably would have started already. Minato had Social Links for every Arcana, though, so there wasn't going to be a link between he and she. That made him feel disappointed for a fleeting moment, before he noticed the warm steam from his and Eu's cups were nearly gone.

"I think our Pheromone Coffee is beginning to get cold, so let's drink," Minato stated. Eu nodded in agreement. The two proceeded to drink their cups with increasing stares from onlookers.

"That was pretty good," Minato said as he exited Chagall Cafe with Eucliwood. For someone who didn't speak, she sure had a lot to talk about... Or write about. The two talked mainly about their tastes in food. Eu also asked about Minato's preference in music, seeing as how he had headphones and an mp3 player on him. He asked if she wanted to listen to his music, to which she responded with a quiet nod. He placed his headphones on her ears, and she listened to his music library. After listening through the entire selection, Eu responded that Minato had an interesting taste in music, and she liked it. She also commented that she liked *Burn My Dread*. Minato pointed out that it was his favorite song. For him, the song felt invigorating.

"Pheromone Coffee does taste a lot better when I'm with a friend," Minato remarked.

[Friend?] Eucliwood wrote, tilting her head.

"Yeah, I consider you a friend, Eu. You're fun to hang out with," Minato stated and smiled.

Eucliwood's eyes widened slightly. Her mouth formed a very small smile at the thought of being someone's friend.

[And I think the same about you, Minato.] She noted.

"I'm glad..." Minato trailed off. He wondered what time it was. He and Eucliwood spent quite some time together. It was fun and all, but Minato had to get his priorities straight. He looked to entrance of Paulownia Mall. It was night out.

The Dark Hour and Nyx were coming soon.

"It's already that late." Minato frowned. He had to prepare himself soon. Everyone back at the dorm was most likely making last-minute preparations at this moment. As much as he didn't want to, he had to leave now. The battle for everyone's souls was approaching.

[Do you have to go, Minato?] Eu questioned by holding her notepad in front of the blue-haired teen's face, snapping him out of his thoughts.

"Unfortunately, yes," he said calmly. "I have to do this very important thing with my friends tonight. I can't miss it. I appreciated spending time with you, Eu. But for now, I have to say goodbye. Take care now. Oh, wait a minute." Before he could forget, Minato reached in his pockets and brought out an envelope. "Eu, I would like you to have this," he said as he handed the armored girl the envelope. She tilted her head.

[What is it?] Eu asked.

"One million yen," Minato answered honestly. When Eu wasn't looking back in the cafe, he secretly placed several yen bills in an envelope. Even a million yen wasn't enough to make a noticeable

difference in his ridiculously large savings. As he expected, her eyes widened upon hearing his statement. "I really feel that you should have it. Take it." He wasn't completely certain as to whether Eucliwood was poor or not, but Minato sympathized with the girl when he found her sitting by herself. Something in his mind also told him that she would need the money in the future. That is, if SEES triumphed over Nyx tonight, or else there wasn't going to be a future.

[Thank you, Minato.] Eu expressed her gratitude. Minato smiled softly.

"It's my pleasure, Eu. Goodbye." The blue-haired Persona-user raised a hand in farewell and proceeded to walk back to the dorm. At the exit of Paulownia Mall, he paused and turned around to see that Eucliwood was standing in front of the fountain. She was holding her notepad up.

[Farewell, Minato.] Minato gave Eu a thumbs-up before he left with his hands in his pockets.

Although he couldn't see her anymore, Eu wrote something else in her notepad after her previous note.

[Good luck.]

April 13th, 2010

'Let's see... How long has it been? An hour? A day? A week? A month? Perhaps a year? I'm not sure anymore. I lost track of time already.'

A month had passed since March 6th.

A month had passed since Minato passed away.

It was lamentable. His soul was being used as a medium for safeguarding Earth. On January 31st, Minato and his friends went to the top of Tartarus during the Dark Hour to face Nyx. Well, Nyx's

Avatar or Ryoji to be more precise. Despite giving it their best efforts, they weren't strong enough to stop Nyx. She wasn't going to stop coming. She was going to eradicate humanity. The prophecy was nearly fulfilled as the end loomed near.

In the face of hopelessness, Minato had obtained the power of the Universe Arcana from the unbreakable bonds he created with his friends, while also receiving assistance from Igor of the Velvet Room.

With the power of the Universe and his friends cheering him on, Minato created the Great Seal. This seal was specifically created as a barrier between Nyx and Erebus, humanity's grief and negative emotions given form. Should the two come into contact with each other, that signaled humanity's extinction.

Minato lived for one more month after creating the Great Seal. It was because of a promise he made to his friends to meet up with them on Graduation Day. Soon after that was achieved, he fell asleep on the lap of Aigis.

Aigis... Minato cared about her as a person. He respected her perseverance in finding and thinking for herself and how much she cared for him when she told him she wanted to protect him, always. ...And she was cute, in appearance and personality.

Little did Aigis, his friends, or anyone know that Minato would die the day after in order to fully become the Great Seal. He willingly trapped his soul to save and protect everyone.

In spite of his decision, Minato was unhappy. Yes, he did it for everybody so they could live on. But what about him? There were so many things that he still wanted to accomplish in his life. He wanted to live still. He wanted to live out the rest of his days peacefully. But he couldn't. It was something that just couldn't be realized.

Being the Great Seal was so monotonous and sad. From his view, the bluenette could monitor Earth. He could see what he would be missing. He chose to not see it, however. Life was so unfair. But as always, Minato didn't show sorrow or regret. He suppressed all of his emotions. He accepted his choice but didn't accept it at the same

time. Eventually, he came to ignoring those thoughts. It wasn't healthy for him to think that way, even if there was nothing he could do about it.

While being the Great Seal, Minato was generally complaining to himself about being bored since there was literally nothing he could do except think and watch. He also had Elizabeth visiting him frequently. The Velvet Room assistant expressed her unhappiness with Minato's current condition. She even suggested that she could take his place as the Great Seal. Even though he couldn't speak to her, Elizabeth knew that he did not want that. It made him happy, though, that he at least had her company. She would talk to him about random stuff like she did when the two hung out in Iwatodai, which he didn't mind.

But now, Elizabeth was gone. She hadn't visited him as of late.

So, Minato was alone again.

'Maybe it's time for me to take another nap. But that would be the same as not looking or paying attention. Whatever. Erebus isn't coming back anytime soon. My friends took care of it a while back. It'll return, just not now. I might as well...'

Before Minato could rest his mind, something amazing happened.

"Arisato Minato..."

'What?' Minato heard a voice. It was unfamiliar. It was beckoning him. He could feel it. Suddenly, he felt his soul being grabbed by something unknown and without form. It felt strange, and yet, it felt soothing as well. He liked this comforting sensation. The voice didn't sound like it belonged to anyone he knew. He couldn't pinpoint where it originated from. Elizabeth wasn't around either to see him.

Whose voice was that?

"Come back..."

At that moment, a shower of bright, psychedelic lights blinded Minato's vision.

It was dark, but there was also light glowing from up above. The moon in the night sky did look beautiful tonight. The cool air caressed a blue-haired teen's face as the wind passed by. It felt very nice.

Wait a minute.

The moon? Air? Sensibility?!

"...!"

Minato's eyes widened greatly. What was this? He could see the sky and feel again! What just happened? He was the Great Seal just a few moments ago, but now he wasn't? Did the seal break? Where were Nyx and Erebus? Before Minato could even attempt to put the pieces together, he saw...

"...Eucliwood?"

Above Minato was a familiar and silver-haired girl he met on the day of his final battle. Eucliwood Hellscythe was gazing at him with her consistently neutral gaze and was kneeling down beside him. When the bluenette said her name, she nodded in response.

"Eu, where am I?" Minato asked, unsure of where he was.

[You're in a graveyard, Minato.] Eucliwood held up her personal notepad with those words on it. The instant after seeing the notepad, Minato instantaneously sat up and looked around in a 180 degree angle. There were tombstones and mausoleums as far as the eye could see. Several dead trees and plants were also seen across the graveyard, which wasn't surprising due to the overbearing atmosphere of graveyards.

"...What a fan-fucking-tastic place to wake up in," Minato commented sarcastically, sounding annoyed.

He narrowed his eyes and frowned shortly after his comment. What the hell? Why did he say that? Normally, he would never let derogatory comments like that slip past him. He always kept those thoughts inside his mind! Eucliwood didn't seem disturbed by his

sudden rudeness.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to swear." Minato avoided Eu's gaze, ashamed of what he said earlier.

[I don't mind.] Eu wrote, almost casual-like.

'Does anything affect her?' Minato thought with an eyebrow arched. Discarding his thought, he asked Eucliwood of his condition, "Anyway, Eu, do you know how and why I'm alive?" There was a chance that Eucliwood didn't know of his death, but Minato couldn't care less right now. This was literally a life-and-death situation he was in.

[I brought your soul back to your body.] Eu responded.

"You... brought my soul back to my body?" Minato asked, pointing at her with uncertainty.

[Yes.] She answered.

Minato blinked. How was that even possible? To him, this sounded like something from that one anime/manga, Bleach.

'Hmm... I'll play along for now,' Minato concluded. He closed his eyes and crossed his arms in a manner that showed deep thought. "That would explain why I'm in a cemetery. My friends must have buried me after I died... But... if I'm here now, what about the—"

[Don't worry about it.] Eu held up her notepad, cutting off Minato as he was talking.

"Don't worry about it? Do you know about the Great Seal, Eu?" What else could she mean by it? Eu nodded in response. "But..."

[It's still there.] Eu answered.

"How?" Minato wondered, genuinely confused as to how it continues to be maintained if his soul wasn't being used.

[I'm a necromancer from the Underworld. I used my powers.] Eu explained. [Persona-users are known throughout the Underworld.

That's how I know about you.] Minato hesitantly nodded. It made sense, in a way. Humans, or even dogs and machines, summoning apparitions based off of mythological legends would sound as if they would be well-known by supernatural beings that could have been actually connected to some of those legends.

"You're a necromancer?" Minato asked. Eu nodded. "...I guess that isn't the strangest thing I've ever heard. What you said also explains how you could know about the Great Seal." The power of Personas, the Dark Hour, and the existence of Shadows were already supernaturally strange. Quite frankly, Minato's life was idiotically abnormal since that day in 1999. He accepted that fact long ago. Since he was back in his own body, he was willing to accept another oddity of this world. He also didn't want to bother knowing about other supernatural stuff because it sounded annoying to learn about. It was easier to accept everything upfront.

"I wonder if you would have made a difference if you were with me and my friends that day... So, the seal is still active? No catch or anything? It'll be fine even without me?" Minato inquired. He knew he was becoming more pushy with the necromancer, but he had to know for certain that nothing unfortunate will happen in the future.

Eu, for a moment, looked as if she was hesitating while writing because she paused when Minato asked her his questions. Even so, she finished writing in her notepad.

[With my powers, I'm able to do the impossible.] Eu continued.
[There's nothing to worry about, Minato.]

A faint smile appeared on Minato's face. "I see... If what you're saying is true, then I'll trust you." What else could he do than believe? Eu made it so that Minato was in his own body again. That alone was sufficient enough to make him believe in the necromancer. "So... I'm alive again?"

Eu continued to write. [You're 100% dead, Minato.] After seeing those words, Minato managed to repress a sigh of disappointment. [I used my powers to make you into a zombie.]

"A zombie, huh? Am I going to crave for human flesh?" Minato

jokingly asked. Eu shook her head in denial. "That's good. I honestly don't like the idea of doing that." He wondered, though, from the zombie movies he watched in the past. What *would* human flesh taste like? Hopefully not like chicken. Because a substitute for chicken in taste like that was wrong.

[You're now able to withstand injuries that would normally kill a human, even dismemberment.] Eu explained. Minato nodded in understanding. [Should you lose a body part, all you have to do is reconnect yourself. As a zombie, you're now able to bypass human limitations in strength at will.]

"That's rather interesting, Eu. Zombies sure have their uses," the bluenette noted. Despite his unusual situation, Minato was extremely glad that he could "live" again. Being a zombie didn't sound so bad.

[In a way, you're immortal. But you can still feel pain.] Eu pointed out. Minato shrugged. He didn't care about his double-edged sword. He could just use one of his many Personas to null injuries or absorb attacks.

Wait... Can he use Personas still? Eu did say his soul was back in his body, so it's possible he could utilize them again. Now he just needed to get his hands on an Evoker.

"Despite the pros and cons of being a zombie, I'm just happy that you resurrected me, Eu. Being a spiritual barrier of sorts was quite dull, to be honest. Is there anything you want in return?" Minato asked generously. He felt eternally grateful to Eu for giving him another chance at life.

[No need.] She replied. Minato tilted his head in confusion.

"No need'?" He asked, dubious of Eu's words. Surely there had to be something she wanted from him. He was brought back to life, kind of, by her, after all.

[You're my servant now.] Eu stated.

Oh. That's why. There was the catch.

Minato actually didn't have any qualms with being Eu's servant. It was a justifiable request because of the circumstances surrounding him. Though, he did consider the possibilities of what would happen if he didn't serve her. For all he knew, Eu could place a mind-controlling spell on him or just erase him from existence. It could be possible, considering that he was released from his damned situation by her abilities. She was a "necromancer", after all.

"...Should I call you 'Eu-sama' or 'Eucliwood-sama' from now on?" Minato asked half-facetiously. He hoped she didn't want to be addressed with either of those names. Confirming his hope, Eu shook her head in rejection.

[Just "Eu" or "Eucliwood" is fine.] Minato mentally sighed in relief. The thought of referring to her with such respect sounded bizarre to him.

"So, Eu... What do we do now?" Minato asked, sort of eager about what would happen from here on out.

[I will stay with you.] Eu replied without hesitation.

Even with her words of encouragement, Minato was mystified. There was one glaring, obvious problem.

"Stay with me? Eu, I *have* nowhere to stay. Japan and everyone I'm friends or acquainted with should already know that I've died. I can't just walk into my dorm or go anywhere in Port Island anymore. There's a good chance I may run into someone who knows me. And if that were to happen, I'd be right under a microscope, a microscope of governmental and intrusive shit—pardon my language, by the way—and that would make things very difficult for both of us. If anything, we would have to leave Iwatodai City and head for somewhere else. As much as I don't want to, we've got no other choice," Minato pointed out. Unfortunately, everything he said was true. He could no longer stay in Iwatodai. Unless he wanted to be the country's test subject, he would have to leave his hometown so no one could find out he walked the earth again.

[A shame, but true.] Eu responded after carefully considering her new servant's words.

"Actually, may I ask what today's date is? While I was the Great Seal, I lost track of time quickly." Minato rubbed the back of his head in minor embarrassment.

[April 13, 2010.] Eu answered. Minato's shoulders slumped.

"...It's already been a month since I died." Minato smiled sadly upon finding out the truth. That definitely meant he couldn't go back to a "normal" life. He couldn't see his friends. He couldn't see his grandfather and his cousin. He couldn't see Aigis. He had to leave. There was just no other choice. He sighed after a moment of reflecting his only option. "It's no good if I keep dwelling on the past, I suppose. I have to move on, just like everyone else did."

Eu tapped Minato's arm, gaining his attention.

[You're not alone, Minato. You have me.] Eu's words perked the blue-haired zombie up.

Minato began to feel faint affection from Eucliwood...

Then, it started.

"!?" A recognizable feeling erupted in Minato's undead heart. A familiar voice rang in his head.

"Thou art I... and I am thou... Thou hast established a new bond... Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Death Arcana..."

Minato grinned lightly. How fitting that he established the Death Arcana Social Link since he was a zombie now.

'A new Social Link? My previous ones must have restarted when I died and got revived. It's a shame, but I guess I'm creating new bonds now, with new people I have yet to meet perhaps. The Death Arcana, huh? I might have to keep a close eye out for Eu in the future.' Those that were associated with the Death Arcana were, well, acquainted with death. This was very obvious because Eu reanimated Minato's corpse with his soul. He assumed that there was more to Eu than meets the eye, especially since she communicated by writing instead of talking. She was hiding

something hard and worrisome that she kept to herself. As with the rest of Minato's past Social Links, only time would tell when the necromancer would be willing to open up to him with her secrets or past.

The blue-haired zombie stood up from his position. Despite being dead for a month, he didn't feel stiff at all. Maybe it was Eu's powers that relieved him of his inflexibility. He felt like he was never dead to begin with. Even so, he whirled his arms around and kicked out his legs to get properly adjusted to his body again. He looked around him and saw a grave that was dug up, assuming that it was his. In front of the grave was a tombstone. The tombstone read:

ARISATO MINATO

BORN NOV. 13, 1992

DIED MAR. 6, 2010

MAN OF FEW WORDS

BELOVED FRIEND

It was odd for Minato to see his own tombstone. *'So that's what my friends inscribed.'* He was touched nonetheless as he placed a hand on his tombstone. Those two descriptions summed him up pretty well. He also glanced at the arm he was using to touch his gravestone, seeing that it was covered by black clothing. He then checked himself to see that he was actually wearing his winter Gekkoukan High School uniform, accompanied with his red "S.E.E.S." armband. He sweatdropped. Did his friends really bury him in his school uniform? Along with his school uniform, he found that he also had his mp3 player and headphones on him. They buried those with him, too? He felt that it seemed like a waste because someone else could enjoy listening to his music. Oh well. Now he could take pleasure into listening to his own music once more! When Minato was done searching himself, he helped Eu up so she could stand.

Before the two could leave, Minato glanced back at his tombstone and noticed that a gun was placed in front of it. He could tell,

however, that it was no ordinary gun. It was an Evoker, an item in which one could use to summon their Personas by shooting themselves in the head with it. Minato considered that it might have been his. Well, now he could test out the possibility of him summoning Personas or not. He grabbed the Evoker and held it towards his temple, closing his eyes in order to focus. With the new Death Arcana Social Link he established with Eu, Minato thought he should try to summon a Persona from that Arcana. Eu stared at her new servant as he was attempting this.

"Come, Thanatos." The blue-haired zombie pulled the trigger.

The sound of glass shattering soon followed as black shards escaped from the other side of Minato's head, and a burst of black energy encircled his body. A recognizable figure manifested behind him. Surrounding itself with a cloak of coffins connected by a chain was Thanatos itself, the ultimate Persona of the Death Arcana. It seemed that even if Minato was a zombie now, his abilities as a Persona-user and a Wild Card weren't affected. That was awesome, despite the subtle difference in color of summoning a Persona. Minato chalked it up to him being a zombie.

"I've still got it," Minato said calmly as Thanatos faded away.

[Very impressive.] Eu commented. She then asked, [Where would you like to go?] Minato shrugged his shoulders in response.

"I don't have anywhere in particular that I want to travel to. Do you have somewhere in mind that you wish to go to, Eu?"

The necromancer held her pen to her chin, thinking of where she would like to go. A minute later, she made her decision.

[Tokyo.] Eu said. Minato raised his eyebrows in slight surprise.

"Tokyo?" Minato repeated. The necromancer nodded. "Alright. That sounds fine. To be honest, I've always wanted to visit there myself. Iwatodai is big and all, but Tokyo seems more exciting, in my opinion. However... I just realized we don't have any money to get there," Minato noted. His personal fortune was most likely gone due to his death. And he didn't know how he could gain money in order

to purchase train tickets or something to get to Tokyo without possibly alarming people he knew. That was a chance he couldn't take.

[Money isn't an issue.] Eu informed. She reached for something from her dress. When she found what she was looking for, she held it in front of her so Minato could see it.

"An envelope?" Minato asked. "Is that the same one I gave you back in January?" Eu nodded. Her envelope appeared to be bulky, so Minato assumed that there was still money inside. "By the looks of it, I should count my blessings that you didn't spend all the yen I gave you. How much is left in it?" The necromancer peeked into the envelope to count how much money was left.

[956,000 yen.] Eu answered.

Minato blinked.

"That's it? You only spent 44,000 yen? What did you even buy?" What on earth did Eu spend on in the past three months? Something cheap probably since she spent about four hundred US dollars when the million Minato gave her was equivalent to ten thousand US dollars.

[Pudding cups.] Eu told Minato.

"...Pudding cups?" He asked, trying to not sound incredulous. He then shook his head. "Never mind. Let's just leave this cemetery. We'll buy some train tickets for Tokyo at Iwatodai Station, and then that will be the start of our journey." Minato began to walk out of the graveyard until he was stopped.

[Can we get pudding cups before we leave?] Eu asked. She was gripping Minato's wrist, preventing him from advancing further.

"Okay, but you'll have to buy them yourself. I can't risk being seen, so I'll just stay out of sight in the dark while I wait for you," Minato complied while also wondering what was with Eu and pudding cups. She didn't mention them when they talked back in January. Were they her favorite snack or something?

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Death Arcana..."

...Apparently so if *pudding* was all it took for a rank up. Minato ran his hand through his hair as he lightly sighed at the absurdity of it.

The ever-silent Eu nodded in eagerness as she and her blue-haired servant vacated the area.

"This is the last call for Tokyo. Please board the train immediately. This is the last call for Tokyo. Please board the train immediately," an automated voice echoed throughout the empty Iwatodai Station.

"This is it... Farewell, Iwatodai, everyone..." Minato said glumly. It was time to leave his hometown behind. Holding a bag filled with pudding cups, Minato walked alongside Eucliwood as the two boarded the train. When they got on, they noticed that nobody else was on board. It was pretty late, though. And today was a weekday, too. Minato was thankful for all of those aspects.

Eu sat on a seat near the door she and Minato entered and proceeded to eat one of her pudding cups with a plastic spoon. Her cheeks flushed a light pink color as she tasted her pudding. Minato stood by the entrance/exit as it closed in front of him. He could see his reflection within the window. Much to his relief, he didn't look like a rotting corpse. He looked the same as he did before he died. However, there was something the blue-haired zombie did not expect to see in his reflection.

"...Why are my eyes gold?" Minato asked aloud, blinking and rubbing his eyes in disbelief. Instead of finding plain, gray eyes in his reflection, he found luminescent golden ones. What was this? His eyes were always gray! Today was just getting even weirder! Minato glanced at Eu for an answer. While she was eating her pudding, she shook her head. She didn't know either?

"...Maybe it's a side effect that comes when a Persona-user becomes a zombie? Is that it? Hm." Minato then shrugged, deciding

not to care about his change in eye color any longer. It certainly wasn't going to be the same to not have his normal gray eyes, but he had to accept it. From here on out, he had a feeling that nothing will be the same anymore as he was now the servant of a necromancer.

As the train began to depart from the station, Minato had the urge to play the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air theme on his mp3, but he thought of something better. He leaned against a pole as he placed his headphones on his ears and selected a song from his mp3 player, one that matched the mood of his departure. It would take a while for he and Eu to reach Tokyo, so he thought he would just listen to music for the time being. It felt like a long day to Minato, even though he was only back in his body for a couple of hours. He felt sort of tired. He closed his eyes and rested his mind, as the song he selected began to play.

"Kimi wa ne tashika ni ano toki watashi no soba ni ita

Itsudatte itsudatte itsudatte sugu yoko de waratteita nakushitemo

Torimodosu kimi wo I will never leave you..."

In Tokyo, a young man was lying down on his bed, staring at the ceiling of his room. His house was empty. He had the whole house to himself. His parents went on too many damn trips without him, so he was alone most of the time.

He was very bored. Daily life as a high school student bored him. He was tired of his going-to-school-and-then-coming-home routine! He wanted something exciting to happen! Something to stir up his not-so-entertaining lifestyle!

Something to end his life of loneliness.

But, he couldn't predict the future. Fate was a fickle mistress in the end.

"I wonder if I'll ever meet another guy I can call a friend. Orito and I have been friends for forever, but Orito is... Orito. I just hope the guy

won't be like him. Oh, and a cute girl would be nice also. I am a guy, after all," Aikawa Ayumu said to himself before falling asleep.

Next: Chapter 2: Are These Zombies?

A/N: Welcome to the first *Is This a Zombie?*/*Kore wa Zombie Desu Ka?* and *Persona 3* crossover!

I know, I know. Three stories? Yes, I'm that ambitious. I'll be updating *The Divine Spirit* after this since some of you are so eager to see the next chapter.

This idea actually originated from me seeing an image online one day. The image had both Minato and Eucliwood on it. Whoever made the image, they said that they wanted to see the two in the same universe, I think. When I saw the image, that's when I came up with this story! Whoever you are that made the image, I hope you see this someday.

Oh, and the birthday I gave Minato? That's not an official thing. From the information I had to go on, the *Persona 3* protagonist was born in 1992, so I just made up a date of birth.

EDIT : Okay, here's a note to everyone who's reading this: I am NOT going by the manga version of Minato. At least, not completely. First off, the game came first, not the manga. Second, the *Persona 3* protagonist, originally a video game character, is a heroic mime, meaning his personality can be determined as one sees fit. He can be as silent as his manga counterpart, an outgoing and generous person, or a dickish snob. A player ultimately determines the protagonist's personality. I am using some aspects of Minato's manga counterpart, like the name for instance; not all of it. So before any more of you say that Minato's personality or characterization is flawed, you are technically incorrect in a sense. Also, if you haven't noticed Minato's "sudden" personality shift and actions now that he's a zombie, especially including his gold eyes, you weren't really

paying attention to what it could mean.

Sorry about the rant. I had to do it because of a ludicrous guest review I received.

Now that I got that out of the way, please enjoy the story and what I have to offer in the future.

Update: Changed a bit of the dialogue and corrected some grammar errors I noticed while re-reading this chapter.

What will happen as Minato and Eu stay in Tokyo?

Will Minato adapt as a zombie?

Will Ayumu get his wish?

Will any of Minato's friends discover that he's back?

What exactly happened to the Great Seal?

Is there any doubt that Minato's life will get more erratic?

All of these questions will be answered in due time.

Thanks for reading! Reviews are very much appreciated!

Question of the chapter : What would you guys like to see in the future for this story?

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Are These Zombies?

Chapter 2: Are These Zombies?

"Spiritual death awaits the individual with the thirteenth card, which is aptly named Death. Death is considered a transitional card... The old ends, and the new begins. Now, let's continue along the path, following the transition. Temperance is the balancing of opposites. Opening his eyes to the world allows the individual to grow..." — Mr. Edogawa

"...I still live."

"...Mhmm..."

"Every man's gotta fight the fear

I'm the first to admit it

Sheer thoughts provoke the new era — "

"...Ugh..."

"Become a big terror, but my only rival is my shadow

Rewind then play it back and fix my own error

Get low to the ground, it's getting better

*Like I told you before, double up, double up and take more cheddar
—"*

"...Huh?"

"L to the J, say stay laced, here's my card, B

Royal flush and I'm the ace."

"...!"

Minato's eyes snapped open. He frantically glanced around him. He was half-expecting to be in the Velvet Room again, summoned once more by Igor from his dreams. Honestly, he never enjoyed those moments. There weren't many times in which they occurred, but when they did come to pass, they always indicated foreboding events in the future. Minato finally became aware of this after he fell ill and recovered when that typhoon appeared in September of last year. It annoyed him that he didn't realize it sooner.

To his relief, Minato found himself on the train he embarked on with Eucliwood. The necromancer was sleeping straight up at her seat. It didn't look very comfortable, but she appeared to be fine. The pudding cups that she purchased before their departure were empty and neatly stacked inside the bag that she received from her purchase. She ate it all last night?

Minato was, apparently, sprawled out on the floor, lying on his back. He frowned. Wonderful. Just what he wanted: a cold, hard surface to sleep on. He must have fallen asleep shortly after closing his eyes. He sat up and looked around, noting that it was still dark outside. He and Eu were the only people present in the train car they were in.

'We should find a place that has beds or futons. I haven't had a good bed to sleep in since the day I died. It would be nice to snooze on a pillow once more. Tokyo surely has to have decent apartments or whatever for rent,' Minato thought to himself as he took off his headphones from his ears, letting them rest on his chest. He picked himself off the cold floor and stretched but was careful about not causing noises to avoid waking up Eucliwood. In case someone decided to loot him during his sleep, he checked for his belongings. Luckily, everything was on him just like he remembered. When he was finished with that, he took a seat across from the sleeping necromancer. He started to stare at her, though not realizing it in the process, as he reflected on the recent turn of events.

'I never imagined myself coming back to life. As much as I hate the sound of it, I assumed the worst-case scenario was that I remained

as the Great Seal for all eternity. Now, I'm a zombie whose master is a girl with strange and mysterious powers... Damn. What a world we live in.' Minato pinched the bridge of his nose. He then looked at his hands, forming open palms and curling fists with them. It all felt real.

'I know magic, in a sense, exists but come on! Sure, Nyx is already something supernaturally strange, but with my situation... It's... It's so surreal! Have I really been resurrected? This isn't a delusional dream I'm having now just to make myself feel better, right?'

In an attempt to disprove his doubts, the blue-haired zombie proceeded to launch a swift punch to the side of his torso, which caused him to immediately clutch that area.

"Yay! I'm alive! Sort of..." Minato cheered, albeit reeling from pain. He then suddenly coughed up a small amount of blood into his hand. It was red, thankfully. "...Probably shouldn't have done that, in hindsight. But, I don't think I put that much force into my punch. Is that what Eu meant by zombies surpassing human limitations? If so, then I'll have to keep that in mind from now on. Anyway, where can I get rid of this blood?"

Minato briefly wondered if there were any restrooms on the train and then remembered that there were, but he would have to leave Eu in order to get to one. Seeing as how she was still asleep —

"Wait, where did she go?" The bluenette noticed that the small necromancer wasn't where she was originally. How did he not hear her move?

Minato then felt his sleeve being tugged. He turned and saw Eucliwood sitting beside him.

[What happened to you?] She asked Minato with her notepad, but her eyes were staring at her servant's bloody hand.

"Sorry, Eu. Did I wake you up?" Minato asked. The necromancer responded with a nod, but she kept her gaze on her zombie's hand. There was blood. Why was there blood?

Eu then looked fixedly at Minato, not even bothering to write on her

notepad to describe her suspicion.

"Um... You see... I... got ketchup on my hand?" Minato lied, making up that lie on the spot.

Stare.

"I... accidentally tripped?"

Stare.

"Okay, fine. I actually punched myself to see if everything that happened yesterday and now was just a dream, and the blood was an unexpected result," the blue-haired zombie admitted. Being stared at by Eu was surprisingly hard to not give in to. "But, I proved that it was all legit, so mission complete."

Eu gazed at Minato for a moment longer before facing straight, accepting her servant's answer, despite how weird it sounded. She supposed it didn't matter what Minato did, so long as he wasn't mortally wounded. He might be a zombie, but that was just another way of saying a human who was brought back to life. He was a person. He had feelings and emotions still. He wasn't like those mindless zombies that people were either terrified of or enthusiastic about.

She didn't want to see him suffer. She did care for Minato, like a friend would. Or so she told herself.

[Don't do it again unless it's necessary, Minato. Okay?] Eu wrote with concern, wanting to get her message across.

"Yeah, I'm sorry for making you worry, Eu. I won't do it again," Minato replied with a small smile while scratching the back of his head. He reached out to pat Eu's head, and she quietly accepted it. Although Minato couldn't tell due to her hardly changing facial expressions, she actually liked it.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Death Arcana..."

'Rank three, huh? This is going by quickly. We're getting more

comfortable with each other, I think. I'm curious as to who I'll Social Link with in the future. This new journey will potentially be absolutely nothing like my last one,' Minato mused momentarily before a voice boomed throughout the train.

"We will arrive shortly in Tokyo within thirty minutes. Passengers heading to the Ikebukuro district in Toshima or the Akihabara district in Chiyoda should remain on this train after our first stop. I repeat..."

"We're almost there." Minato grinned, but it was made with a half-hearted effort. On one side, he was thrilled that he and Eu were almost to their destination. On the other, he was disappointed that he left behind Iwatodai. He left behind people he could actually call friends and, maybe, family. Moving continuously during those past ten years didn't help him make any lasting friends, which made him quite wistful until he came back to Iwatodai.

Suppressing a scowl, he gazed through the windows as the sun began to rise into the sky. Eu decided to watch with Minato.

'I hope everyone has moved past my death by now. Aigis... I wonder how you're faring. Are you living your life like a person? If you are, that would make me feel better.'

Iwatodai

It was early in the morning in Iwatodai. Sunlight was slowly beginning to show itself as a new day was approaching. The city was relatively calm and quiet, and while there were some birds chirping, their tweets managed to produce a more relaxing atmosphere. There were also the occasional joggers doing their early morning runs, but they weren't capable of disrupting the beauty of dawns with their exercising.

A girl with short blonde hair and dark blue eyes was wide awake and roaming the sidewalks. She wore a standard female Gekkkoukan

High uniform, which covered up a majority of her body below her neck, together with a red ribbon. She was a third-year student at the prestigious Gekkoukan High.

This girl's name was Aigis. In actuality, she was an android constructed by the well-known Kirijo Group, designed to appear like a human in order to use the power of Personas. Her original purpose was to combat and destroy Shadows as the 7th Generation Anti-Shadow Suppression Weapon; that purpose was accomplished months ago. For the past few months, she became more human, in a sense, through developing human-like aspects and a personality. Right now, it's hard to see that she was a machine to begin with. Compare her current self to her past self, and the differences will be made obvious.

Aigis was on her way to a place that she went to every single day since April 2nd.

That location was the cemetery, which housed the body of Arisato Minato, the person who she held dear the most.

Even after Aigis found out what actually happened to the blue-haired former leader of SEES, she made a habit of visiting his grave every morning, rain or shine. She came to talk about recent events: things that were going on in her life, what the other members of SEES were doing, et cetera. She knew he probably couldn't tell if she visited him or not, but it didn't matter to her. After all, she made a promise to him. Although he wasn't around anymore, she still wanted to keep that promise alive.

She will always be there by his side, protecting him.

"Shall I purchase Yukari-san something to eat on my way back? She never has enough time to prepare and eat breakfast before we have to attend school," Aigis pondered to herself, approaching Iwatodai's cemetery entrance. She then realized that she didn't bring her money with her, causing her to sigh lightly. Her money consisted of her winnings during the events of March 31st, along with Minato's massive savings that he saved up. He couldn't possibly use it anymore, and it seemed like a waste to not do anything with it, so she inherited his fortune when everybody in SEES voted to see who

would get it. Although, Junpei was kind of miffed at first from the results.

"Hmm... I suppose it cannot be helped. I'll have to remember to carry a suitable amount of yen tomorrow when I come to see Minato again," Aigis said after thinking for a little bit. She nodded to herself in small satisfaction, something she normally did before she managed to become more human. She still had the tendency to do that, occasionally.

As she was getting closer and closer to Minato's grave, Aigis put on a bright smile to greet him.

"I'm back, Mina—"

Before Aigis could finish what she was saying, her eyes widened greatly. Her mouth was open, but no words were escaping from it.

In front of her was Minato's final resting place, but it was *not* how she remembered it!

It was dug up! Someone had the nerve to disturb Minato's resting place!?

'No... Who could have done this!?' Aigis was stunned. She couldn't even utter a word. Her voice just... died.

Her eyes immediately darted towards Minato's casket, which was right next to the recently created hole. The lid to it was gone. Aigis then dashed to the coffin, dreading if her worse fears had become reality.

To her horror, Minato's corpse was not in his coffin. His Evoker, which she placed in front of his tombstone a while back, was missing too.

"..."

And just like that, Aigis's mind went blank.

Tokyo

'Another morning, but the day will inevitably be the same like the rest,' Ayumu thought as he walked to school, also letting out a yawn. Today began as another ordinary day for him. Waking up early for school, cleaning himself up, making breakfast and then eating it while watching television. It was a common routine for him, but it was rather dull because it was very repetitive. His after-school activities were no different since it consisted of him doing a few miscellaneous things in the city, like buying food or watching a movie, before returning home.

Recently, he started to wonder if this was how he was going to spend the rest of his high school days. Living a horribly monotonous lifestyle that may last through college, too? He wasn't too fond of that scenario playing out, but what could he do about it? He had to admit, it was a peaceful, if not mundane, way of life, and he liked some tranquility. He could change it right now if he wanted to with his own hands. He really could!

...But he wasn't sure what he truly desired at the moment. Honestly, it was more like he was too lazy. His laziness was one aspect of himself he kind of disliked, but never bothered to do something about it. It was something he was borderline apathetic to. He briefly sighed at his conundrum before placing an arm over his eyebrows. The sun was shining brightly today among the blue skies.

'Damn. It's been pretty hot in the area, lately. Because of that and the predicted weather forecasts, everyone at school and I had to switch to our summer uniforms. Well, I guess it's no big deal. It's not like I can't handle some heat.' Ayumu smirked, despite beginning to sweat a little from the warmth outside. It certainly was strange to see an increase in temperature during spring this year.

Two individuals walked out of a local train station after making a quick stop to the restrooms in Tokyo into broad daylight, earning raised eyebrows and curious glances from passing onlookers as

they stood on a sidewalk. One of the individuals was a silver-haired girl who was sporting armor on her person, for some reason. It was, by all means, an odd sight, especially considering the weather as of late. Some just immediately passed her off as a cosplayer, which wasn't uncommon in a place like Japan. The second individual was a boy with blue hair who was taller than the girl he was accompanying. A couple of people recognized the clothes he was wearing was, in actuality, a male student uniform from Gekkoukan High School. The institute was heralded as a pretty prestigious private school from an educational standpoint. Many students who actually attended there say otherwise, but that was beside the point. The uniform wasn't what made the male stand out.

People weren't sure how it was happening, but they could literally see steam coming from him.

"Eucliwood."

[Yes, Minato?]

"I am a zombie, right?" Minato asked the necromancer.

[You are correct. Why do you ask?] Eu wrote to her servant.

"Oh, no reason. No reason at all. It's just that I was wondering... **WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I'M ON FIRE!?**" The blue-haired zombie shouted with irritation as he walked alongside the small necromancer in the streets of Tokyo, not caring if people paid attention to him as they passed by. He could feel every inch of his body crying out in agony! And he didn't know why he was experiencing this!

Looking for a way out, he spotted a nearby alleyway that held some shade. He quickly grabbed Eucliwood's hand and proceeded to take shelter under the shadow. Leaning against a wall, he let out a relieved sigh as he began to cool down.

[I'm sorry. I forgot to mention that zombies shouldn't linger in broad daylight for so long. That's one of a zombie's flaws.] Eu explained while standing in front of Minato.

"What? Isn't that more of a vampire trait?" Minato questioned with his eyes narrowed. In nearly every iteration of stories that involved vampires, other than being weak to garlic and having some other Achilles heels, sunlight was a vampire's greatest enemy. Dissolving on the spot was what usually happened when they were exposed to that massive star in the sky.

[Not all vampires have that flaw.] Eu replied simply. [You'd be surprised how many legends of supernatural things are false or exaggerated in this world. Going back to your status, as a zombie, if you continue to stay in sunlight, you'll become severely dehydrated.]

"Is that so? I wonder how those who are interested in the occult will be affected if they learned the truth," the bluenette said with a carefree tone. "That aside, how are we going to get anywhere with me being a zombie? I can't go out into the light, otherwise I'll look like a walking skeleton. I'm certain that you don't want to wait until night falls, too."

Eucliwood pondered for a moment. [Regrettably, there isn't anything I can do to help. If it were up to me, I would gladly negate that side effect. Minato, do you perhaps have a Persona that is resilient to heat? Maybe that could be effective?]

"...I haven't thought of that. Yes, I do, actually," Minato responded. Without a second thought, he switched from using Thanatos to a Persona that can help him in his situation. Like last night, black shards floated out of his head. "Let's see if this will work."

Minato stepped out of the shadows and into the light of day, not entirely sure that this idea was going to succeed, but he had to at least try. Eu looked on with interest.

"Ahh, this feels so much better. One switch to Loki, and no more withering!" Minato fist-pumped. Loki thankfully had Null Fire as a passive skill. However, despite his newfound invincibility to sunlight, Minato was sweating. He could feel the intense heat lingering around him. "But now... I can feel how hot it is outside. Spring normally shouldn't be this warm. It's no wonder many people are wearing T-shirts and shorts today."

[Shall we go clothes shopping, then?] Eu asked as she approached Minato from behind. She pointed at his clothes with her pen. [You look torrid in your black school uniform.]

A thin smile formed on Minato's face. "Good idea, Eu. That, and..." He took a big whiff of his blazer. "...These clothes smell like dirt. I'm also hungry for breakfast. If you're hungry too, then let's find a place to eat."

Eucliwood gave a nod of acknowledgement to that suggestion.

With that, the zombie and his necromancer master went on their way to a clothing store and to grab a bite somewhere, disregarding increasing inquisitive stares from passersby.

Iwatodai

"Calm down, Aigis! Tell me what's wrong!" Takeba Yukari found herself standing at the front of her apartment with a very unnerved Aigis. She was just about to leave for school, thinking that her android roommate had gone ahead of her, until Aigis frantically came running towards her with noteworthy speed.

"I... Opened... He... Not..." Aigis was flustered. She was unable to speak coherently. The images from earlier were still haunting her mind. An empty coffin, and Minato's corpse was nowhere in sight. When Aigis finally came to from her stupor, she immediately ran from the site. She had to tell someone!

"Aigis, take a deep breath..." Yukari instructed calmly. Aigis might have been an android, but she was a human in spirit. Yukari wasn't sure if this method would work, but it was worth a try. She had never seen Aigis in this state before.

The blonde android did as she was told and breathed in and then out. She repeated this process a few times and was beginning to calm down.

"Did that help?" Yukari asked, placing a reassuring hand on Aigis's shoulder.

"It did... Thank you, Yukari-san," Aigis expressed her gratitude, but she still felt on edge.

"No problem! Now, why are you so tense? Did something happen?" Yukari cocked an eyebrow as she crossed her arms.

"...He's gone, Yukari-san," Aigis mumbled.

"Huh? Who's gone?"

"...Minato. He's gone!" Aigis shouted.

Yukari tilted her head. She was genuinely confused by her friend's behavior. It had been tough for her as well since she also had... feelings for the blue-haired Persona-user. A month had elapsed since he passed away, but she can say for certain that she was doing a better job of keeping her cool than on the last day of March. She knew Aigis had done the same as her when it came to moving on, so seeing her act like this now was completely weird.

"Um... Look, I know it's been tough since Minato died, Aigis, but we have to be strong. He wouldn't want us to keep brooding over him like this," Yukari said with an encouraging tone, though she was bewildered nonetheless.

Aigis's gaze became stern.

"That is not what I mean! His body, at his grave, is not there anymore!" She admitted.

"...Eh?"

A sad look dawned on Aigis's face as she was about to explain. "I went to visit Minato earlier this morning, and I found that his grave was dug up. His corpse... wasn't in his coffin."

Yukari fell silent.

"...Yukari-san?" Aigis poked her for a reaction.

Nothing. Not even a blink as the Anti-Shadow Suppression Weapon waved a hand in front of Yukari's face.

Just like with Aegis before, the female archer's mind grounded to a halt.

Tokyo

"How do I look, Eu? This is the first time I've asked for someone else's opinion on how I dress," Minato said as he exited a dressing room in a department store. He and Eucliwood came across a local mall after searching for a decent amount of time. The bluenette was wearing a simple black T-shirt, accompanied with light blue jeans. He also wore black and white sneakers. Excluding his school uniform, Minato felt that he wore a lot of blue last year, which was true and absurdly redundant since he already had blue hair. He believed now was time for a change of style.

[You look nice. I like your choice of clothing.] The necromancer complimented. [Black will look good on anyone.]

"You think so, too? I agree. ...Oh. Sorry for not asking sooner, but do you want to shop for some clothes as well, Eu?" Minato asked.

[I think I'll be fine with what I currently have.] Eu answered, pointing to the purple dress she was wearing right now.

"Are you sure? I'm not one to judge, but don't you have any other clothes to wear?" Minato questioned concernedly.

Eucliwood shook her head.

[I'll be fine, Minato. I appreciate your concern, though.] She wrote.

"If you say so... If that's your wish, then I'll go with it," Minato said somewhat dejectedly. He found his master's insistence to be a little odd, but he didn't mind. If that was what Eu wanted, he would obey her.

'...Great. I'm already accepting her as my master,' Minato thought with a slight narrowing of his eyes. Again, while he was grateful to Eu, the idea of him being her servant was, for lack of a better word, embarrassing. Then again, she didn't ask him to do anything humiliating, so he supposed it was fine.

Well... who was going to know about their relationship besides Eucliwood and Minato himself, anyway?

[If you're done, shall we go pay for your new clothes, Minato?] Eu asked with her notepad which was mere inches away from Minato's face, bringing him out of his thoughts. [After that, we should go eat.]

"Alright. I'm pretty much finished. So, what would you like to eat, Eu?"

[Takoyaki.] She replied immediately, as if she didn't have to think at all.

It was with that word that made Minato feel a bit happy. Eu's choice for food reminded him of Maiko and the times the two spent eating weird takoyaki together. It was delicious, even though Minato never knew what the secret ingredient for it was. Elizabeth knew just by smelling the takoyaki for the first time when she went out with the bluenette. Minato was a tad disappointed that he never asked her what it was. Oh well. Too late to do anything about it now.

"Good choice."

"Hey man, you doing anything after school?" A male student with glasses and spiky black hair asked as he walked up to his friend, who was sitting at his desk in a classroom.

"Why? What are you up to now, Orito?" Ayumu asked tiredly and suspiciously with an eyebrow raised.

"Dude, you make me sound like I have some ulterior motive," Orito replied, throwing his hands up into the air and sounding offended. He couldn't hide his shit-eating grin that proudly displayed itself on his face, though.

"Uh-huh..." Ayumu's eyes narrowed shortly before letting out a tiny sigh. "So, what did you want to ask me?"

"Ayumu," Orito began as he wrapped an arm around his friend's neck before loudly proclaiming, "we're going to go pick up chicks after school!"

Most of the girls in the classroom shook their heads at the dark-haired boy's announcement. Others shot dark looks at him that made him shiver.

Ayumu didn't really react much. He was used to his friend's strong desire to have a girlfriend. That, and his perverted tendencies as well. Sometimes he wondered why he hung around Orito. Perhaps it was because of the fact that Orito was his only friend, which was sort of pathetic, in all honesty.

The gray-haired boy had to agree that he wanted a girl in his life, too. Nearly every normal teenage boy at his age wanted one. As tempting as his friend's offer sounded, there was a problem.

"That's a generous offer, Orito, but I'm going to have to decline," Ayumu told his friend.

And with that response, Orito's jaw dropped as he backed away a little.

"WHAT?! Don't tell me you swing the other way, Ayumu!"

'As usual, quite the accusation.' Ayumu rolled his eyes and facepalmed before saying, "No. It's just that I haven't stocked up on food in a while. All I have left in my house are eggs and instant ramen. I was planning to stop by some stores tonight before I head home."

"Oh yeah. You're living alone right now," Orito said in understanding. "Man, your parents sure do love to travel. You need an extra hand for your shopping, Ayumu?"

"Nah. I'll be fine, but thanks for asking, Orito," Ayumu replied with a smile.

"What are friends for, right?" The dark-haired teen's upbeat expression then turned serious as his eyes gained a sharper gaze. "But, be careful while you're out, okay? That serial killer is still on the loose, you know."

'They still haven't been caught?' Ayumu thought with furrowed eyebrows. Lately, this murderer had managed to kill several people during nighttime in various locations. Those who were victims were found to have slashes and stab wounds across their bodies. The media and the police hypothesize that the killer might be using a katana as a weapon. They've warned the public multiple times about staying indoors at night if possible and to be cautious about opening doors, too.

Ayumu wasn't one for late night walks, but he had to get food. He was sure that he'll be alright if he didn't stay out too long. He was just going to grab some grub and rush back to his house. How hard was that gonna be?

"I know. I'll be careful."

A Few Hours Later

[Are you still sore about the takoyaki, Minato?] Eucliwood asked. She and Minato were walking down a street in a more suburban area of Tokyo. Night had already arrived, which also meant that the blue-haired zombie could use any Persona he wanted to use without suffering from his zombie side effect. Minato was wearing the clothes he first tried on earlier today, along with his headphones and mp3. He was holding two bags with one of his hands. One contained his Gekkoukan uniform, and the second had some other clothes that he bought for himself. He didn't want to wear the same set of clothes every day. It would get boring really fast.

"Not really. I mean, I was initially, but not anymore," Minato responded.

[I didn't think you would be so mindful about money.] Eu stated.

The blue-haired zombie turned to his master. "Did you take a good look at the price for a stick? It was ten times more than what I had to pay for one in Iwatodai. It did look delicious, but it seemed like a ripoff... Anyway, I still can't tell whether heading to that maid cafe was a good choice or not."

[A lot of girls stared at you the entire time.] Eu pointed out, making Minato shrug in response.

"True, and we also kept getting new ones to serve us every few minutes because most of them couldn't form a sentence without hiding their faces from me. It took us nearly half an hour to finally place our orders. Not to mention some of those girls wanted to dress you up in a maid outfit, which took up more of our time."

[Me writing to them didn't help, either...]

"It sure didn't. Most of them were like, 'That's so moe!' and kept hugging you. In any case, at least the food was tasty," Minato remarked, which Eu concurred with a nod. He sighed and then continued. "Sorry that we couldn't get takoyaki. It's not that I'm being cheap. We just don't have an unlimited supply of money. Until we find a way of getting more, we need to be mindful about how much we spend."

[That's understandable.] The necromancer wrote, agreeing with her servant.

Minato nodded and said, "Also, we have to find a place to stay at. That's my main reason for being concerned about yen. With today's expenses, plus our train tickets that we bought after I became a zombie, that all comes down to... somewhere below 890,000 yen."

[We have a lot remaining.]

"Indeed, but my point still stands. For now, let's, I guess, rent a hotel room for the night. Tomorrow, we'll go apartment hunting," Minato declared.

[Sounds good.] Eu wrote. [Let's grab some snacks first.] She pointed

ahead to a convenience store a couple of blocks away.

"How convenient..." Minato whispered.

"Damn. Why did I have to leave my wallet at home? Now it's already dark out... But at least I changed out of my school uniform," Ayumu muttered to himself, now wearing more casual clothing. When school ended earlier, he left for a supermarket that provided everything he wanted to purchase and eat. After gathering most of the things he wanted to buy, he then noticed his wallet wasn't with him. Remembering that it was back in his room and cursing to himself, he made his way to his home. By the time he left the house again, the moon was up in the sky.

Not wanting to make the trip back to the supermarket and risking an encounter with a serial killer, Ayumu settled for shopping at a local convenience store. It wasn't the supermarket, but it would have to do for the time being.

'I suppose I could have made instant ramen for dinner. One night of it doesn't sound too bad. Well, I'm already out, so I might as well shop,' Ayumu mused. He was almost at the convenience store. It was only a few minutes away from his house.

Moments later, he arrived at the parking lot.

"Huh?"

Ayumu stopped in his tracks.

A couple of feet away at the front of the convenience store, by the entrance, was probably one of the prettiest girls he had ever laid eyes on. Her long, shining silver hair stretched all the way down her back, and although she wore a strange getup, that didn't mire her appearance whatsoever. She was just sitting there, not looking at anything in particular, with two bags next to her. Was she waiting for someone? Was she taking a break from shopping? Or was she alone?

The silver-haired girl looked at him, her eyes meeting his.

Ayumu was at a loss for words as he kept staring with a noticeable blush on his face. He couldn't take his eyes off her. She just had this... captivating, otherworldly aura around her that interested him. He wanted to make small talk with this girl but didn't know how to go about it. What should he do? He had to say or do something, otherwise things could get awkward soon.

Well, like someone forgetting their lines from a script, he was going to improvise!

"So tell me, do you believe that UFOs are real?" Ayumu asked finally with a smile and a hand on the back of his head.

The girl immediately turned away from him, seemingly disinterested.

'OH CRAP, WHAT WAS I THINKING?!' Ayumu screamed mentally, realizing the stupidity of what he just said. *'Of all the things to say to a pretty girl, that's what I say?!'*

"I know Eu said I could get anything so long as I buy her pudding and some meat, but most convenience stores don't exactly carry both," Minato said with a sigh as he walked through aisles. This convenience store had lots of instant ramen, candy, soda, energy drinks, and junk food, but sadly no pudding or meat. "It can't be helped, I suppose. Guess I should leave and tell Eu about this. She'll probably want to go to another store."

The bluenette promptly made his way to the exit to return to his master but stopped himself before he could exit.

Through the glass window, Minato could see Eu sitting outside... and a teenager with grayish hair who was breakdancing in front of her, apparently. It was certainly a weird sight.

'He is good, though,' Minato observed inwardly. He honestly couldn't tell if the stranger's breakdancing would be considered good since he hardly ever saw someone doing it in his life, but that was what he personally thought.

...Until the guy suddenly slipped while trying to balance on one hand

and fell.

'Ow. That looked painful.' Minato cringed slightly. Even with that fail, Minato had to admit this guy had some skill. *'I should probably go see if he's all right.'*

Before Minato could leave, he saw Eu go over to the teenager and talked to him with her notepad. There was a smile on the guy's face, followed by an expression that Minato couldn't quite describe. The two seemed to be engaging in a conversation, judging from the teen's mouth movement. The boy looked like he was having a good time talking to Eu. Perhaps she was having a good time talking to him, too, even though the blue-haired zombie couldn't see her face from his position.

Minato faintly smiled.

'Time to go introduce myself,' he thought as he left the store. He didn't really want to idle around inside the convenience store for much longer. It wasn't exactly his taste to intervene in others' chat, but maybe his entrance could spice things up. He was a Wild Card, after all. He might even get a new Social Link out of this.

"Sorry, they didn't have what you wanted," Minato announced with his eyes closed while rubbing the back of his head and walking up to Eu. He was purposely acting as if he didn't know what was happening so his sudden arrival wouldn't be too awkward. He feigned slight surprise as he looked at the teen sitting near Eu and asked, "Oh, who's this?"

Ayumu's face froze as his eyes met the eyes of a blue-haired boy who looked like he was around his age. The bluenette's eyes had the unusual color of gold, and they were probably bright enough to be seen in complete darkness. Why did this guy have gold eyes? Was he wearing colored eye contacts? Wait, why did that matter right now?

[That's a shame.] The silver-haired girl responded. She "talked" to him so casually. Did that mean...?

'Oh no! Is this guy her boyfriend?' Ayumu panicked on the inside. Did he seriously just talk to a girl who was already taken?! If so, then this looked quite bad for him. On instinct, Ayumu quickly clasped his hands together and said, "I'm so sorry!"

The bluenette tilted his head, looking confused.

"Ano, what for?" He asked.

"I didn't know she was your girlfriend! If I did, I wouldn't have talked to her!" Ayumu said apologetically.

"...Oh. That's what you're going on about. For a moment, I thought I did something wrong. Don't worry, random stranger. This young lady here is not my girlfriend," the boy with blue hair stated after blinking a few times.

"...Huh? She isn't?" Ayumu blinked and turned to the silver-haired girl for a confirmation.

[He's somebody I know.] She wrote on her notepad.

"That is a more tame description, but she's right. I'm someone she knows. Nothing romantic going on between us." The bluenette waved his hand dismissively.

Ayumu let out a sigh of relief. He so wasn't looking forward to getting beaten up by a jealous boyfriend tonight. Then again, the person in front of him was about as skinny as he is. Judging based on his appearance, he seemed to be an aloof bishōnen type who liked listening to music. He didn't look very strong. Looks can be deceiving, though. Although it didn't define him entirely, there was this vibe from this guy that just screamed, "Don't mess with me."

There was also something... familiar about him. Ayumu couldn't quite put his finger on it. Where did he see this person before?

"Excuse me, but do I know you from somewhere?" He asked the blue-haired teen as he pointed at him.

"Hmm... I don't think so. Can't say that I know you, random guy." The bluenette shrugged.

'That was a quick denial. Maybe it's just my imagination, then,' Ayumu concluded.

"I don't mean to sound rude, but what were you two talking about? I'm sort of curious," the bluenette brought up.

[I told him that he looked like a suspicious idiot.] The armored girl wrote.

Ayumu flinched from her response.

'Great. Now he'll think I'm an idiot.' Ayumu frowned.

The golden-eyed boy had an unnoticeable smile that lasted for a mere second before saying, "Is he? He seems like a somewhat competent breakdancer to me."

"Wait, you saw that?" Ayumu asked.

"Inside the store, yes. I don't know much about breakdancing, but you appeared to be pretty good, up until the moment you fell."

"Haha... It's... a work in progress," Ayumu said with a bashful smile.

"Well if you keep refining your moves and learn some new ones, then perhaps you'll be a pro in no time," the blue-haired teenager assured.

"R-Really?" Ayumu stammered, surprised that he was receiving words of encouragement about his breakdancing.

[I believe so, too.] The silver-haired girl added.

"Seriously? If you both say that, then I think I should consider practicing more!" Ayumu said with short-lasting excitement. The blue-haired boy and armored girl looked at him with amusement.

Minato was content. This gray-haired teen who first spoke to Eu seemed to be a nice guy. The three made small talk about little things as they sat in front of the convenience store, thankfully not

getting into anything personal like where they were from. The chat basically consisted of the stranger talking to Eu with Minato listening on with interest. He didn't mind. The gray-haired teen even offered to buy Minato and Eu something to eat or drink. Though Minato declined politely, Eu desired famichiki, and the gray-haired boy proceeded to get it for her right away. She already unintentionally got the poor guy to do her bidding.

Once Eu was finished with her famichiki, the gray-haired teen picked himself off the ground.

"Well, it was nice talking to you two, but I should get going now," he said with a smile.

"It is getting rather late, isn't it?" Minato noted, not really knowing how much time had passed. "Be careful on your way back."

The gray-haired teen nodded. "Same to you both. Watch out for that serial killer, alright?"

"Serial killer? There's one in the area?" The blue-haired zombie asked curiously, earning a raised eyebrow from the person he was talking to.

"You haven't heard about it?"

"I can say for certain that I haven't watched TV in a long time," Minato admitted truthfully. "I'm more of an... Internet-type of person."

"That's understandable, I guess. There is an actual murderer on the loose, so try not to die when you two go home," the teen informed with sincere concern.

'It might be best for you to not die on your way home,' Minato contemplated. He was a zombie, so he wasn't going to go down very easy from an assault. There was Eu, who was a necromancer, but he felt certain that she could protect herself. If necessary, he would protect her if she actually needed help.

However, if anyone needed to be guarded from harm, it would be the teen who was about to leave.

The young man with grayish hair smiled at Minato and Eu and waved goodbye to them. "Bye. Stay safe when going home, you two. Have a good night," he said as he began to walk away.

[Take care.] Eu wrote, despite the gray-haired person not being able to see it since he had his back turned.

A moment of silence passed before anyone wrote or said anything.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking, Eu?" Minato inquired, glancing in the direction in which he last saw the young man.

[More famichiki?] She wrote in the blink of an eye.

Minato couldn't help but sigh in exasperation and stood up, resisting the urge to facepalm himself. "No. We can get some later. Look, until that guy gets back to his house, let's keep an eye on him just to be safe. It's only a feeling, but I feel that something bad will happen soon."

[OK.] Eu wrote after thinking to herself for a few short moments.

'Hmm... I'm beginning to wonder if she's the more submissive one in this relationship,' Minato mused, thinking that Eu was a little too compliant for a master as he helped her up.

"How awesome is it that I spoke to a really cute girl, and she seemed interested in me too!" Ayumu cheerfully said to himself as he walked back to his house. "That guy who was with her was pretty cool as well. I wonder if I'll see those two again?"

Ayumu honestly hoped that he would see the bluenette and the armored girl soon. He felt relaxed being with them, as if he didn't have to worry about anything else in the world. It might have been a strange meeting, but he believed he made some new friends tonight. Although...

"Ah crap. I'm an idiot. I didn't even ask them their names!" He facepalmed. *'Great job, Ayumu. You didn't bother telling them your*

name, too.'

Suddenly, he heard the sound of glass smashing.

"Huh?" The noise sounded like it was close by. Where did it come from? Ayumu then noticed a house just ahead of him. However, it wasn't the only thing he perceived.

"...Blood?" Ayumu muttered, his voice shaking. There was blood splattered across the house's second floor window. Then, he remembered the existence of the recent serial killer who lurked the streets of Tokyo at night. "Oh no... I'd better call an ambulance... and the police too!" He said as he pulled out his cell phone.

Just when he was about to make the calls, an unexpected, feminine shout penetrated his concentration.

"Somebody heeeellllpppp!"

Ayumu broke out in a cold sweat as he gritted his teeth.

'What do I do? Ah hell!' Without considering the consequences, Ayumu put his phone away and made a run to the house.

'I must be nuts,' he thought as he opened the front door, which was evidently unlocked. It was pitch-black inside, and he couldn't see very well because of it. *'I'm no hero! What the hell can I do?! And what happens when I find the killer?!'*

Despite thinking those words, Ayumu entered the home, his heart rate increasing by the second.

After taking a few steps into the house, he paused when he saw the side of a staircase.

'Oh shit. I'm in way over my head.' Ayumu could do nothing but stare at the huge blood stain that wasn't masked by darkness. Were the people who lived here already killed?

Ayumu shook his head. *'No. Not yet.'* He still hadn't found the girl he heard screaming, let alone any corpses. Until then, he assumed that someone could still be alive in this house.

'I gotta help her. Her scream sounded like it came from upstairs.'
The gray-haired teen made his way to the stairs, clinging on to hope that this girl was alive.

...Until he stopped abruptly. As much Ayumu tried, he couldn't move his body. It was like he was under someone's control.

'Wh-What's going on? I-I can't move!'

And then, he felt an immensely painful sensation in his chest.

With a horrified expression on his face, Ayumu looked down to find a sword going through him and his own blood dripping from the tip of it.

'...I guess I know what happens when I find the killer.'

Ayumu could feel his conscience slipping away. His body felt weak and unresponsive. The pain of being stabbed in the chest was... too much to bear.

The blade was then removed from Ayumu's body, and he fell to the wooden floor with a thud, his blood forming a pool under and around him.

'Is this... really the end for me? There was so much more... that I could have done... in my life... Oh god... This hurts so bad...' Ayumu weakly thought before his vision saw total darkness.

"No... We were too late..."

[No. He can still be saved.]

"You mean... you're going to...?"

[Yes. It's the only way.]

"But you can't do it here. I can hear sirens coming this way."

[Bring him to the graveyard we passed earlier, then.]

"Again with a graveyard? Tch. Looks like we don't have any other choice right now."

"Don't die..."

"I see you're awake now."

Ayumu saw a familiar mop of blue hair standing above him, along with a cute girl who had silver hair and armor on and was on her knees. They were both gazing down at him. "Oh, you two..." Those two... He met them before he was killed by that serial killer. Why were they here? He died! At least, he think he did.

'Is this... the afterlife?' He thought with slight hesitation.

"There are better places to take a nap than on the ground, you know. Give me your hand." The bluenette extended his hand towards Ayumu with a smile.

Seeing the hand in front of him, the gray-haired youth grabbed it with his own and was pulled up to where he could sit up straight. He then faced the two people next to him.

"Am I still alive?" He wearily asked them, clutching the spot where he was stabbed. It was evidently healed, as if he was never injured to begin with. His shirt, however, still had a bloodstain on it.

The armored girl shook her head slowly.

[You're dead.] She answered with her notepad.

'Damn...' Ayumu grimaced inwardly. "So, you and he are angels of death."

The silver-haired girl shook her head again. The blue-haired male remained silent with his arms crossed.

[I made it so you wouldn't die.] She explained.

"You did, huh? Who are you?" The gray-haired teen asked the girl.

His eyes narrowed a bit as he read what she said next.

[A necromancer.] was her response.

"This is way too weird!" Ayumu exclaimed.

'I thought that at first when it happened to me,' the boy with gold eyes remarked in his mind.

"I don't understand! Am I alive... or dead?" Ayumu brought a hand to his face, feeling distressed about the news brought to him.

[Don't worry. I will stay with you.] The supposed necromancer stated as she silently nodded.

"You'll... stay with me? What do you mean?" Ayumu wondered, not exactly understanding what she meant.

[I'll be with you, no matter what.] She specified. Did that mean she would live in the same house as him?

Wait. That actually didn't sound so bad! Ayumu's face then displayed a genuine, caring smile, as if he found love for the first time, which wasn't totally false. He could go back to his home again! But... where was he? He took a look around and found that he was in a cemetery-like area. How did he get here? Did this necromancer and blue-haired guy bring him to this place?

"Um... I hate to interrupt, but we've gone a long time without introducing ourselves. I think it would be best to get that out of the way," the blue-haired male elucidated, bringing Ayumu out of his thoughts. "This person who resurrected you goes by the name of Eucliwood Hellscythe." Eu waved her hand at Ayumu. "She's a necromancer from the Underworld."

"From the Underworld... It explains why I'm not dead, er, alive, or whatever, I guess. Oh, my name is Aikawa Ayumu, by the way. So who are —" Ayumu unexpectedly cut himself off before he could finish his question. His eyes widened as he pointed a finger at the only male here besides him, realizing what he had forgotten. "Hold

on, now I remember you! You were on TV!"

"I... was?" The bluenette tilted his head, honestly perplexed. Ayumu nodded eagerly.

"Yeah, you were on the news last month! I remember seeing someone's picture on there who looked a lot like you," he informed. "Something about a second-year student who died of unknown reasons. Autopsies and doctors couldn't find anything that could have been a potential cause of death. Looking at you now, you look exactly like that student! Except... he had gray eyes, I think."

"...Should have known my death would have created some controversy." The boy with gold eyes sighed from the information given to him. "Yes, that person is me. I'm the same as you, but I died over a month ago. Eu here brought me back to life just recently. In fact, I came back to life yesterday night."

"Y-You've been dead for over a month?" Ayumu's mouth dropped from shock.

"Shocking, isn't it? But let's move past that. I still haven't introduced myself, have I? I'm Arisato Minato. It's nice to meet you, Ayumu," the person, whose name was revealed to be Minato, introduced himself.

Ayumu blinked a couple of times. "U-Uh... Likewise, Arisato-san."

"Ah, you can cut the formalities, Ayumu. I prefer being called by my first name, anyway," Minato informed his fellow zombie.

"Oh. Well, okay then, Minato." Ayumu smiled. "I'm fine with you calling me by my first name, too."

"Thou art I... and I am thou... Thou hast established a new bond... Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Temperance Arcana..."

'So Ayumu is a Social Link? It's sad that we met under dark and strange circumstances, though,' Minato thought briefly. He was honestly not expecting to create a Social Link with someone who just died not too long ago. This was certainly an eccentric journey Minato was on, and he had a feeling that it was just the beginning.

"That's better. Anyway, welcome to servitude, Ayumu. You're now a zombie like me," Minato said with his arms spread wide.

"I-I'm a zombie servant!?" Ayumu cried out with an eyebrow twitch. Was he now really forced to do Eucliwood's bidding? And he was a zombie, too?! Well, when he really thought about it, a zombie did describe him more than anything else. Did that mean he would hunger for human flesh also, like zombies did in books, TV shows, and movies? That... didn't sound particularly appetizing whatsoever.

Minato faintly smiled from Ayumu's reaction. "Don't worry. I'll explain the zombie stuff to you later. And being Eu's servant isn't as bad or demeaning as it sounds," he informed. "All Eu really wants is food and a place to sleep. At least, that's what I believe. I've only been her servant for a day, so I don't have much experience myself."

[You're on the mark, Minato.] Eu wrote.

"I was right?" The bluenette asked, legitimately surprised that was all Eu desired. She nodded in response. "Huh. So anyway, we arrived in Tokyo today after coming from Iwatodai."

"Iwatodai? Oh, that place that has Tatsumi Port Island next to it," Ayumu recalled.

The Persona-user gave a nod. "I lived at a dorm and went to school at Gekkoukan High there before I died. Like I said earlier, I was dead for a month, so me walking through the streets in that city was out of the question. Eu was the one who decided that we should come to Tokyo."

"So in other words, you two currently don't have a place to stay," Ayumu deduced after analyzing the information given to him.

The necromancer nodded and blue-haired zombie sighed.

"Unfortunately, yes."

"You two can come crash at my house, then," Ayumu notified them. "I don't mind."

[What about your family?] Eu asked him.

"I'm an only child, and my parents take trips around the world all year round. They're hardly ever home, so there's no need to worry," Ayumu said as he shrugged.

"Are you sure? We would appreciate it, Ayumu," Minato told the gray-haired zombie. "That does save us from spending the yen we currently have on an apartment."

"Really? How much do you have on you right now?" Ayumu asked curiously.

"Near 900,000," Minato estimated with a straight face.

Ayumu found himself blinking in shock.

"HUH?!"

[Minato was quite the rich student when he was alive.] Eu explained to her new servant.

"It's only a fraction of what I originally had, though. And that money was earned through *lots* of hard work," Minato stated with a faint frown. "But we're getting off topic. Aren't you tired, Ayumu? You must be after what you've been through tonight."

"Honestly..." Ayumu yawned loudly while covering his mouth. "I can say that you're right."

[Shall we get going, then?] Eu wrote to her servants.

They both nodded, and Ayumu stood up from the ground.

"Well first off, we need to get out of this cemetery. Then I'll lead you guys to my house." He smiled warmly at them as he waved for them to follow. "If you two need anything, just ask me. After all, we're housemates now."

"Thou art I... and I am thou... Thou hast established a new bond... Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Fool Arcana..."

"Hey, Eu, can I ask you a question?" Minato asked his master as they both walked behind Ayumu, who was a few feet ahead of them.

[What is it, Minato?]

"Going to that cemetery reminded me of something. Did we ever... re-bury my grave back at Iwatodai?"

The necromancer pondered that question for a moment.

[I don't believe we did.] She replied.

If Minato never showed himself being upset before, it was definitely noticeable now.

Next: Chapter 3: Crossdressing, Bonds, and Vampire Ninjas

Preview:

"My name is Yuuki Makoto."

"I am more interested in him."

"A little Agidyne or Ragnarok, and that lobster is fried."

[Two is enough.]

"Geez, what a pervert."

"...What the hell am I even looking at?"

[Fetch him.]

"Don't look!"

"You're all right, Minato!"

"You aren't worth the trouble, you filthy maggot."

"Why only me?!"

"I sense a case in the making."

"I don't think I can win. I *know* I can win."

Social Links:

Fool (members of Ayumu's house (for now)): Rank 1

Death (Eucliwood Hellscythe): Rank 3

Temperance (Aikawa Ayumu): Rank 1

A/N: Four months, over one hundred favorites and followers, and over three thousand views later, the second chapter to A Necromancer's Wild Card is finally out!

Oh man... Never thought that this story would get so popular within a short timespan... And just *one* chapter, too!

Terribly sorry about the wait. Real life can be a pain sometimes. It was also kind of tough trying to figure out some characters' Arcanas for Minato's Social Links and a quote for this chapter, but I now have a firm grasp as to who belongs to which category! The quote I ended up using turned out to be *completely* perfect!

I didn't realize the significance of the date I gave for Minato's birthday until just recently. November 13th is apparently World Peace Day! Huh... I suppose it fits?

A lot of things happened this chapter. Minato and Eu came to Tokyo, Aigis and Yukari finding out that Minato's body is gone, and Ayumu dying and being brought back to life. Unfortunately, he had to die the same way he did in canon, so I'm sorry for part of this chapter being like the anime.

There is something I'd like to talk about with the rest of you: A Necromancer's Wild Card being a multi-crossover. As said by tsun on this site via private message, Is This a Zombie? has a rather tight

story. There are a few elements from it I can explore, but not a whole lot. To keep things interesting, I'm just wondering what other anime, manga, or video games should be a part of this fanfic. I'm not implementing a plethora of them, though, otherwise it'll get too crazy for me to handle. What I'm thinking is that they'll be side stories, pretty much. Every now and then, Minato and the gang will get themselves involved in other events. I've already dropped some hints in this chapter to two things I might add later on.

So, my question to you all is this: What anime/manga and or video games would you like to see crossover into this story? Also see if you can guess what I'm thinking about adding, too!

Oh, and I won't be including Tokyo Ghoul, Tokyo ESP, or High School DxD. I chose not to involve the latter because there are way too many Persona 3 crossovers with that. If you want to read a good Persona 3 x High School DxD fic, then read A Demon Among Devils by The Crimson Lord, if you can tolerate a much more seemingly emotionless and apathetic Minato. Definitely worth a read. Tokyo Ghoul and Tokyo ESP have more serious stories that would dampen the overall mood of this fanfic.

Next time, Minato, Ayumu, and Eucliwood meet Haruna and Seraphim! ...That's pretty much chapter 3 in its entirety.

And with that, that's all I have to say. ...Oh wait! Two more things:

I would like to say thanks to everyone who read, reviewed, favorited, and followed this story! If you guys have questions or topics you want to discuss with me, don't be afraid to say so in your reviews!

Minato will also NOT be a Magical Garment Girl. For those who were dreading the opposite, no need to worry anymore.

Update: Edited most of the dialogue and got rid of a few errors. Nothing too major changed for this chapter.

Thanks for reading! Reviews are very much appreciated!

Reviewers:

Seeker213: Not at all. It was based upon the Persona 4 Persona-

users' Shadows' eye color, which was gold.

Guest #1: I haven't found any sources that pinpoint the Persona 3 protagonist's birthday to April 1st. That is April Fool's Day, though... It *would* sound fitting, I guess. But I'm gonna stick with November 13th.

will: I do want to pair Minato with someone, but it won't be Eu. He'll be an emotional crutch to her, just like Ayumu is in canon. I'm sure this chapter answered part of your question; Ayumu will be a comic relief character, but he'll still have an important role. New Personas? Maybe. I'm playing through Persona 4 Golden right now, so I'm seeing which Personae I could include.

tsun & DPSS: Is that what happened? Hmm... Well, let's just see how things will unfold in the future.

ZairiX: In a sense, yes, it does.

PCheshire: Fate has a strange way of connecting things. I can't say anymore, otherwise I'll spoil things.

Lewamus Prime: There are things that you said that I do plan on implementing into this story. However, Minato won't be a zombie hybrid of some kind. He'll just be a zombie who was once human.

Guest #3: Really? Then I'll have to taste Japanese pudding for myself someday.

BruceNadeauJr: Will Minato and Yu meet? Perhaps. Interesting idea about the Great Seal. Did this chapter meet your expectations? I know what I'm going to do that is related to the Great Seal, but your words did inspire a new idea for me! Thanks!

Guest #4, Y2JKKKKK, and monster: A vampire ninja wife for Minato, you three say? Will that happen? Sadly, my lips are sealed.

Crossdressing, Bonds, and Vampire Ninjas

Chapter 3: Crossdressing, Bonds, and Vampire Ninjas

"Most people live their lives without ever knowing it, but the world is full of weird stuff. Things like magic and monsters and... the thing that I've become." — Aikawa Ayumu

One Month Later

Tokyo

"The tea is ready, Eu," Minato announced, wearing a plain blue T-shirt that matched his hair color and black pants, as he walked through Ayumu's living room while bringing his master, who was sitting at a wooden coffee table, a warm and tea-filled cup that had her name on it and a teapot. He knelt down to hand her the cup of tea and said, "Here you go."

[Much appreciated, Minato.] Eucliwood responded before grasping her cup and beginning to sip from it.

"Anytime," the bluenette answered simply as he placed the teapot on the coffee table and took a seat next to Eu. He noticed that she was watching TV and decided to watch with her. There was a comedy shtick on at the moment, but the routine wasn't humorous enough to make the self-mute necromancer laugh.

By now, a month had elapsed since the Wild Card Persona-user was resurrected by Eucliwood Hellscythe and met the resident who technically owned the house they currently lived in, Aikawa Ayumu.

During that time, things had been rather peaceful and quiet for the zombie teenagers and their necromancer master. Minato and Eu grew accustomed to their new home shortly after Ayumu brought the two of them to it. Ayumu's house was a basic one with nothing special to it, but it was comfortable and nice-looking with adequate space. Conveniently, Minato and Eu each had their own rooms to sleep in. There were also quite a few extra empty rooms that seemed unnecessary for the gray-haired zombie's family of three, however. Speaking of unnecessary rooms, there was one room in particular that was used for the purpose of storing a bunch of miscellaneous souvenirs that Ayumu's parents sent him from wherever the hell they go to in their travels.

Minato couldn't help but feel annoyed when he discovered this. His fellow zombie's parents seemed like they had all the time in the world, and they never spent much of it with their own son, if Ayumu's attitude towards them being gone was any indication. The gray-haired teenager seemed to be quite apathetic about his parents not ever being home. To Minato, family was everything, something he lost when he was only seven-years-old. Although, he felt like he had one again when he bonded with his teammates from SEES and the people he created Social Links with before he passed away.

Minato never said this aloud to anyone, but he never enjoyed being alone. That was his biggest fear when he became the Great Seal, despite his willingness to give up his life for it to save humanity. He knew the consequences of using the power of the Universe Arcana, but in the end, he knew his life could serve as mankind's barrier to absolute demise. Selflessness was more important than being selfish. That was just something the blue-haired teen understood very well when he faced off against Nyx on his own. In that rather short confrontation, he kept thinking of one question: What was one life, when weighed against the lives of millions? Coincidentally, it was the same question that played in his mind when he had the choice of killing Ryoji or not on New Year's Eve.

Nevertheless, he still felt horrible for leaving everybody he knew and cared about behind. Even though he was revived by Eucliwood, allowing him to be able to walk among the living again, his decision will always be one of his deepest regrets, and, at the same time,

something he didn't regret.

Right now, with his second chance at life and in an attempt to move beyond the past, he was hoping that he would gain another family while he lived out his undead days with Eucliwood and Ayumu. Speaking of which, for the last month, Minato had ranked up his Social Link with Eu once while he ranked up two times with Ayumu's. The Fool Social Link only increased one time, right when the three had dinner with each other for the first time. It didn't take much for the Persona-user to strengthen his bonds with them. All he really did was talk to them casually and listened to what they had to say, akin to how he normally acted last year when he spent time with the people he previously had Social Links with. Like last year, though, he wasn't bonding with his housemates for the purpose of having maxed Social Links. He truly wanted to have close relationships with both Eu and Ayumu.

The entirety of last month was pretty much dedicated to helping Ayumu adjust to being a zombie, who also wanted to try and keep living like a normal person, with Minato acting as his senpai, more so in an educational sense but sometimes in a zombie sense too, and Eu quietly observing and pointing out important details to them.

One day, Ayumu tried exploiting a zombie ability by utilizing more than 100% of a normal human's strength by punching a tree. While the tree did snap—or really was blasted away from its trunk — Ayumu's wrist then broke, which he then proceeded to whine for a good while. He had regeneration, of course, so the injury didn't last very long. That did, however, make Minato wary of using more than 100% of his physical strength. It could be helpful in overpowering something if only he found a way that wouldn't lead to broken limbs. He had been trying to find a method since that day but deemed that he had all the time in the world to discover it. Literally. He wasn't in that big of a rush or in need of a new technique.

If anything should happen, Minato was a Persona-user, after all. Megidolaon for everything!

"Hmm... Ayumu sure is taking a while to get back from school today," Minato noted after several moments of looking blankly at the flat screen TV in front of him. He looked to his right to see the

desktop computer in the room, which displayed the current time. It was almost six p.m.

Typically, Ayumu stayed at his school after it ended until nightfall. As a zombie, he also had the same side effects as Minato had, including the awful weakness to sunlight. Unless the weather wasn't sunny, the gray-haired teen usually had no choice but to wait for nighttime, much to his chagrin. Unlike Minato, who was capable of nullifying his weakness to sunlight with a Persona, Ayumu had no such method to exploit, so he had to use an umbrella to shade himself sometimes. However, he didn't take one with him today because the weather forecast stated that there wouldn't be any signs of sunshine today. By noon, there was definitely sunlight out by then. Were weather people ever right?

The teenager with gray hair had promised to come home early today to cook dinner. For the past month, he and Minato took turns to cook breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert. Much to Eu's unnoticeable and silent delight, the two zombies were very exceptional cooks.

"Should we wait a bit more for him, Eu?" The bluenette asked his master. He was certain by now that she was getting hungry, if hearing her stomach growl was any indication.

[Fetch him.] Eu ordered when she finished sipping her tea, tapping her notepad with her pen. [I want to have dinner already.]

'Pretty direct, as always. She must be getting impatient,' Minato mused as he sweatdropped. While he knew Eucliwood was very sweet on the inside, she seldom ever showed that side of her. Hell, Ayumu had on-the-spot fantasies about her and that side when he tried to be motivated about something Eu said to him. The poor, weak-kneed teenager, however, didn't do a good job of concealing his looks of satisfaction whenever he had those fantasies since Minato could easily read him when they happened. Minato also had a hunch that Eu was aware of her newest servant having those imagine spots, too, which surprised him that she didn't say anything related to them yet.

"All right, I'll try and find him," the blue-haired zombie spoke as he began to stand up. He was about to make his way to leave through

the front door until...

"Hey, I'm home..." An exhausted, defeated voice made itself known as the living room's sliding door slid open, revealing Aikawa Ayumu, still wearing his school uniform, who also had quite a few noticeable scuff marks on his face and clothes.

'Did he get hit by a truck?' Minato wondered momentarily before he greeted his fellow zombie by saying, "Welcome back, Ayumu. I was just about to go look for you."

"Oh... Heh, sorry that I was late, Senpai," Ayumu apologized, smiling a little and scratching the back of his head.

"Don't worry about it," Minato dismissed. "I'm just glad that you came back... intact, I'm assuming?"

"Yeah, I'm still in one piece." *'Somehow,'* Ayumu added in his mind. "Thanks for your concern..." Ayumu then glanced at Eu, who was taking a sip from her tea and watching TV. It didn't seem like she noticed his arrival. "Um... Eu? Did you hear me?"

Eu placed her cup of tea down on the coffee table in front of her, taking a moment to write on her notepad.

[Get the food ready.] She wrote, looking directly at Ayumu as she tapped her pen for emphasis.

"..." Ayumu narrowed his eyes. That was seriously what she had to say to him?

[FOOD.] Eu repeated with capitalized letters.

Ayumu rubbed the side of his head, resisting the urge to sigh. "Oh, sorry. I know I'm late, but I kind of got creamed by a truck on the way home."

"Oh, so you did get hit by a truck," Minato commented, yet he sounded like he was hardly surprised. "I was wondering due to your scuff marks. Lucky guess, I suppose."

Ayumu quietly acknowledged his senpai's words with a nod, thankful

that he didn't press the matter further. Though while almost becoming roadkill did take up most of his time, the real reason why he was so late today was because the force of the impact from the truck sent Ayumu flying through trees, subsequently causing him to lose his clothes in branches in the process. He sadly had to go get his clothes back while running around in his boxers, much to his embarrassment as people saw him in broad daylight. *'He and Eu must never know.'*

[No problem.] Eu responded. She then wrote, [The menu is Manchu Han Imperial Feast.]

'What? I only made simple sashimi yesterday. Ayumu got something fun to cook today,' Minato lamented in his mind while he sat next to his necromancer master again.

"Geez, this is just your tough as nails exterior, right?" Ayumu asked in exasperation, not looking forward to creating a grand feast. "What you really meant to say instead was—"

"Ayumu, I'm oh so hungry! Would you please hurry up and make me dinner?" A mere fascination of Eucliwood in Ayumu's mind asked in a cute voice. *"And I feel dirty , so you can scrub me till I'm clean."*

"...Yeah, of course. That's what she meant," Ayumu muttered to himself, a satisfactory smile and blush adorning his face.

Eu stared at the gray-haired zombie for a brief moment before drinking her tea again.

Minato sighed. *'Almost reminds me of Junpei...'*

Nighttime

"Anything exciting happened around here today, you two?" Ayumu asked his two housemates, now wearing a black V-neck T-shirt with gray pants after changing out of his school uniform. The three of them were currently dining on Ayumu's food, which actually was kimchi pork due to Ayumu trying to reason with the necromancer to which she accepted the alternative, at the coffee table in the living room. The food, in Eu's and Minato's opinions, tasted delicious!

"Listened to my music while wandering through the neighborhoods for a bit. You know, the usual," Minato replied with a shrug before eating some of his rice. "Although, I did check out Tokyo Tower this time around. It was rather nice."

Ayumu smirked. "Heh, Minato went to Minato, Tokyo, huh?"

"Uh-huh. The amusement wasn't lost on me." The bluenette smiled lightly. "So, how was school, Ayumu?"

"The same as usual, Senpai. Nothing particularly new happened. How about you, Eu?" The gray-haired zombie asked the necromancer.

[Slept.] was all the silver-haired girl said.

"Ohh... My nap today would have been much nicer with you..." Yet another Eu of Ayumu's imagination said dreamily.

"That sounds so nice..." Ayumu responded, eye-smiling. He then opened his eyes and noticed some rice that was attached to the small necromancer's cheek. He reached out to get rid of it. "Hey, you got some rice stuck on your—"

Before the youth with gray hair could touch her face, Eu quickly struck his wrist with the chopsticks in her hand with precision, causing a disgusting sound of bones being fractured to be heard.

"Ahh!" Ayumu then proceeded to roll around the floor while clutching his damaged wrist. He just wanted to be helpful! "Ow, ow, ow!"

"Hold on, I got it," Minato said casually, intended on finishing what his fellow zombie tried to do while stretching out his own hand.

Just like before with Ayumu, Eucliwood attacked Minato's wrist with swift precision.

However, no sound of bones being fractured was heard.

"Good attempt, Eu." Minato couldn't help but smirk a little, while taking the small piece of rice off of the necromancer's cheek and eating it. "I have Beelzebub equipped right now, and it nulls Strike damage."

Very slightly, the silver-haired girl's eyes narrowed. [No fun.]

"Yes because damaging bones is so much fun," the blue-haired zombie deadpanned at her sense of humor. He knew Eu was just having a little fun with her servants. All damages done would be healed, anyway. Minato then glanced at the male who was rolling around the floor still. "How are you holding up, Ayumu?"

"It sucks that zombies can feel pain!" Ayumu proclaimed, making a few more pained noises. Minato had to agree with him there.

With that response, Eu placed her chopsticks down and wrote on her notepad. [If you weren't a zombie, you wouldn't be here.] She stated.

Ayumu then paused, becoming silent as his wrist began to heal and as he looked at his master.

[Problem?] Eu continued.

"Uh, no," Ayumu answered modestly. "If you hadn't brought me back, I'd still be dead. And a fractured wrist is way better than that. I wasn't trying to complain just then."

"That goes for me, too," Minato chimed in, giving his master a warm smile. "We're grateful that you made us into zombies, Eu."

After a short moment, Eu quietly accepted her servants' answers, proceeding to eat her food once more.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Fool Arcana..."

'Sweet.' With that rank up, Minato continued to eat his succulent dinner.

'Besides,' Ayumu continued inwardly, his eyes narrowing, 'if I stayed dead, I couldn't search for the person who killed me...'

One Hour Later

Dinner was over. The dishes were practically licked clean due to Eu's and Minato's large appetites. Minato offered to help tonight by washing the dishes in Ayumu's kitchen, leaving the necromancer and the gray-haired teenager at the coffee table. Eu was silently drinking more of the tea that the bluenette had brewed for her.

Ayumu, on the contrary, with a hand under his chin to support his head and his elbow on the table, absentmindedly stared at his master.

'Eucliwood Hellscythe; Eu for short. Necromancer from the Underworld,' he thought, describing the silver-haired girl and beginning to reflect the undead life he lived for the past month. *'She started living here a month ago with Minato-senpai. ...But I still can't say I really know her.'*

It was true. With his two new housemates, Ayumu really only got to know the music-loving bluenette in the past month. Eu didn't have much to say about herself. He had only been given a general explanation of who she is by her and Minato. Not much else, sadly.

"All right, I'm done with the dishes," Minato said as he walked into the living room. "Are you finished with your tea, Eu?"

The necromancer nodded and handed her empty cup to him. [Thank you, Minato.]

"No problem," he replied with a carefree tone, making his way back to the kitchen to wash the cup in his hand.

Unbeknownst to the blue-haired zombie, Ayumu began to stare at him while also thinking about him.

'Arisato Minato. Like myself, a human who became a zombie. He apparently died as a second-year student back in March of this year. Technically, we're in the same grade because he passed away before he could become a third-year, but I refer to him as my senpai since he's older than me and a lot smarter than I am when it comes to academics. He's been helping me out quite a bit with my homework. He also likes music and is a great cook. Although he is a human, he has this unique power called Persona... What did he say about it? Something about it being a manifestation of a person's personality? Well, whatever it is, there are people in the world that can use a Persona, and he can summon more than one, apparently. I saw it all firsthand that one night when I broke that tree. I almost couldn't believe it. He and Eu explained that most Persona-users only have one Persona, but his case is different.'

Despite his senpai's unique ability, Ayumu believed that Minato was a nice person and enjoyable to be with. While Minato never said it, Ayumu sort of got the hint that the blue-haired boy wanted to live a "normal" life, like he did, even though he had an unfathomable power and could potentially raise hell with it. Perhaps his death was what made the bluenette want to live his now-undead life to its fullest.

'...That's strange.' The gray-haired zombie blinked.

Now that Ayumu thought about it, how did Minato die? Neither Minato or Eu specifically stated what caused his death. The news report that Ayumu saw a few months ago said his senpai's cause of death was unknown. Honestly, this world that he lived in was not all it appeared to be once he got to know Eu and Minato. Some supernatural factor could have been the reason. If Ayumu did ask his fellow zombie or necromancer master, would it make them bring up uncomfortable memories they wanted to forget?

'I probably shouldn't ask. Death isn't exactly a pleasant thing to talk

about,' Ayumu mused, shaking his head and ending his reflection of his housemates.

"Orito. Hey, what's up?" Ayumu asked, answering his cellphone while standing on the balcony connected to his bedroom. Some time had passed since dinner was finished, and everybody in the house decided to go and do their own thing before bedtime. Eu was watching TV in the living room, and Minato had chosen to browse the web on Ayumu's desktop computer, saying he wanted to search for something. Before his friend called him, Ayumu was busy gazing at the night sky on his balcony.

"Holy crap, are you watching the news?" Orito responded to his friend's question with another question, sounding unnerved.

"Uh, no," the youth with gray hair answered.

"Dude, there's been another murder."

With that statement, Ayumu narrowed his eyes. Great. Yet another person was killed by this psychopath, as if Ayumu's own death wasn't enough to satisfy their bloodlust. How long was this murdering spree going to last? This was getting downright absurd.

"How many does this make now?" The spiky black-haired student continued.

"I think one was too many," Ayumu replied, seriousness evident in his voice.

"No joke. Serial killer on the loose is some scary shit, man. You should probably be extra careful since you live alone, you know?" Orito warned, concerned about his friend.

'Not anymore I don't,' Ayumu corrected inwardly before saying in a snarky tone, "Yeah, sure, mom."

"You don't have to be a dick," Orito countered.

Ayumu sighed. "Sorry, man."

"It's cool, it's cool... Just try and stay safe, okay?"

"Sure. You too. See ya," Ayumu said before hanging up.

"I'll be honest, this murderer has gotten on my nerves, too," Minato admitted to his fellow zombie, both of them walking down a street filled with street lamps that were lit up. He sighed. "Taking lives like that is just unacceptable."

Ayumu nodded in response. The two were currently surveying neighborhood areas in search of the serial killer that's been plaguing Tokyo as of late. Once Ayumu was finished with his conversation with Orito, he told Eu and Minato that he was heading out for a "walk." Minato volunteered to join him. He already knew what his kouhai was planning to do because of the fact he heard about the serial killer through the news while Eu was watching TV. Ayumu was okay with having his senpai tag along and asked his necromancer master if she wanted to come with them. She declined, though, saying that she wanted to stay home for the night.

So with that, Minato and Ayumu left the house together in search of this murderer. Should the two zombies actually come across this person, then it would most definitely be the end for him or her. After all, they couldn't die anymore, so it would be easier to take this psychopath down.

Ayumu was dead serious about stopping the killer. While part of his reason for being so absorbed in ending this murderer's meaningless killstreak was out of sheer vengeance, Ayumu didn't want anyone else to become a victim like him.

'I've gotta stop them from doing what they did to me —to anyone else in this city.'

A couple of minutes later, the zombie teenagers took a break from their search at a graveyard. Like at any other cemetery, the area was littered with copious amounts of gravestones and was giving off

a spooky feeling. A light and transparent mist veiled the area.

Minato and Ayumu were resting by a particular tree that was obviously dead and circularly bent at an angle. The bluenette was listening to music from his mp3 with his headphones, and the gray-haired teen was drinking from a can he got from a vending machine they passed on the way here. Ayumu had to admit, he felt more comfortable in this location than he did in his own home. He chalked it up to him being a zombie. Minato, however, hardly shared the same feeling.

"Yup. This is my new happy place," Ayumu said out loud.

"Are you serious, Ayumu?" Minato asked, overhearing what his kouhai said as he took off his headphones.

Ayumu arched an eyebrow to that question. "What? You don't feel the same, Senpai?"

"No. I don't," Minato stated bluntly. Honestly, in the location he was in now, he felt depressed. "Maybe it's because I actually lived in a cemetery for a month. I thought I would be more adjusted to being in graveyards than you because of that, but I'm really not feeling it."

Ayumu shrugged. "Oh well. I guess everyone has their own preferences..." He then took another sip from his drink.

With the conversation over, Minato was about to listen to a track from his mp3 player again until...

"Do you hear something, Ayumu?" He questioned, his eyes glancing left and right carefully.

"Hear what, Minato-senpai?" The gray-haired teen asked, starting to curiously look around himself.

Minato concentrated, closing his eyes so that he could focus better. "Hmm... It sounds like a... chainsaw?"

The sounds that Minato detected then became louder and louder. Sure enough, they did sound like they originated from a chainsaw. It also sounded like it was clashing against metal or something just as

hard, repeatedly. The two zombies then looked to their left and saw sparks lighting up in a darker part of the cemetery, their gazes now fixated at the sight. It was definitely getting closer to them.

A few seconds later, they were able to see a huge shadowy figure with glowing red eyes, followed by hearing some grunts as it moved around sporadically.

'A *Shadow?*' Minato thought with narrowed eyes, his hand reaching towards his pocket to grab his Evoker. It did kind of resemble a creature that Minato and his friends could have killed in Tartarus. And those red eyes... They reminded him of Erebus. If it was a Shadow, how could it still roam this world, especially with the Dark Hour gone?

Ayumu, after seeing the odd dark form, did a large spit-take, effectively releasing the drink that he was storing in his mouth, before loudly shouting, "HOLY CRAP! WHAT IN THE HELL IS THAT?!"

A loud explosion then occurred, causing the two zombies to look up.

From their vision, they saw... pink and white striped panties?

"What the...?" Minato couldn't help but arch an eyebrow.

"And now, you lousy bastard, it's time for you to friggin' DIIIIIIIEEE!" A girlish voice bellowed from above, revealing a girl in pink clothing about to directly bring down her chainsaw on Ayumu.

Instantly becoming distressed and screaming his head off, Ayumu quickly dove out of the way, rolling on the ground while clutching his head until he came to a stop at a tombstone. Minato simply jumped back a few feet in the opposite direction, his hands in his pockets. The shouting girl then collided with the spot the two boys were originally at, creating a small but apparent crater as a result.

Confused from what just happened, Ayumu stood up, looking at a newly formed cavity in the ground from where he was standing. "The hell? What was that? Some kind of cosplayer?"

"You all right?" Minato appeared next to the gray-haired zombie in

an azure blaze, having activated a Masukukaja from switching to Siegfried in his mind and using his Evoker. He believed that he and his kouhai were in a for a fight soon, so he utilized a status enhancer skill for good measure.

"Somehow, yeah," Ayumu responded. Now he was on edge, wary about will happen. He also felt faster, as if he could run a mile. Why was that?

The dust smoke faded away from the recent impact site, and there was a girl there who indeed looked like a cosplayer, wearing a pink and frilly attire. She was shorter than Minato and Ayumu, from their estimates. She had light and short brown hair, part of which also included a noticeably thin and long ahoge. She also had purple-ish eyes and bared a fang. The most notable thing about her right now was that she was trying to remove her pink chainsaw that became embedded in the ground.

"Hey, wait..." Ayumu began speaking to the unknown female after he grimaced at the sight of the oddly colored chainsaw, trying to put the pieces of what happened together. "If you attacked me, then that must mean..."

"YA!" The brown-haired girl cried, finally able to yank her chainsaw out of the ground but promptly landing flat on her butt.

"YOU, YOU'RE THE SERIAL KILLER, AREN'T YOU?!" Ayumu accused loudly with determination, pointing a finger at her.

'This girl?' Although Minato didn't know for certain, somehow he doubted that this girl clad in pink was the murderer who killed Ayumu, despite having a peculiar object that can potentially be used as a weapon with her. Looks, however, could be deceiving, but Minato couldn't shake this feeling.

"What?! I wasn't attacking *you* !" The girl, sounding offended and swinging her hand to her side, exclaimed at Ayumu. "You just got in the way of *that* freak!"

'...Am I the freak?' Minato wondered innocently. The small female didn't clearly indicate who or what she was referring to.

Suddenly, a low but menacing growl was heard from behind the two zombies.

"Huh?!" On instinct, Minato swiftly turned around him and retreated a few feet away from what he saw with his increased speed, unintentionally leaving Ayumu behind, who appeared to be dumbfounded.

The shadowy figure with glowing red eyes from before was back, and with a swipe of its arm, it launched an attack on Ayumu, piercing his torso and his leg with its big claws.

"Ugh...!" Ayumu coughed up blood, his body now limp and stuck on the claws of the figure, which turned out to be a giant bear-looking monster standing up straight and wearing a long-sleeved, buttoned shirt that resembled a student gakuran. The bear then roared loudly with some type of steam shooting forth from its mouth. "Oh... Guess you mean this freak...?"

"Oh, you have got to be kidding me!" Minato complained loudly, clicking his tongue and glaring at what was in front of him. "Even with the speed boost I gave you, you didn't even dodge, Ayumu?"

"HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW ABOUT ANY BOOSTS?!" Ayumu yelled back.

"You could have *at least* tried to dodge!" The bluenette retorted.

"Aw, man! Dammit, I'm gonna lose points for that now!" While getting up on her feet, the brunette clad in pink complained, too. About what, Minato and Ayumu had no idea. "Anyway, don't worry 'cause I'll avenge you! So be a good boy and rest in peace, okay?"

Minato stifled a laugh before gripping a gun-shaped object in his possession.

"Um, look about that..." The gray-haired teenager tried to talk back while also attempting to suppress his pain, wanting to say that he can't exactly "rest in peace" because he was a zombie.

"Shut up and go into the light!" The brunette boldly commanded. "To the light!"

"I don't see a light, you dingbat!" Ayumu snapped back in irritation. He then sighed a little in annoyance and looked towards the dark sky above him. What an unusual day he was having here and now. "Man... this sucks... Wait, what is tha—"

"Ziodyne." With a transition to Lucifer, Minato shot himself with his Evoker, bringing forth the fallen angel from the sea of his soul and causing a decently sized bolt of lightning to strike down on this bear monster that literally had his kouhai in its grasp. The thunder-based attack consumed the monster entirely in a column of electricity, but thankfully it wasn't large enough to the point in which it could also zap Ayumu. The red-eyed bear let out an anguished roar from being intensely shocked.

"Holy hell!" Ayumu exclaimed, freaking out from almost being cooked alive by lightning.

"Whoa, where the heck did that come from?! And what the hell is that behind you?!" The chainsaw-wielding girl shrieked, astonished at what she was witnessing from the blue-haired boy next to her. When she made eye contact with Lucifer, she could have sworn that the demonic-looking entity glared at her for a second. That sent shivers down her spine.

"Long story that I could explain later. Can you help set my friend free?" Minato hastily asked the girl, Lucifer still floating behind him. He was confident that he could take care of the situation himself, but he believed that this girl with him didn't bear any ill will and that she could take care of herself, taking into account her crashing from the sky earlier. He also didn't mind the extra assistance.

The brunette shook her head many times to snap out of her bewilderment, before she put on a proud face. "Of course I can! Do you have any idea who you're talking to?"

'Not really, no,' Minato ruminated concisely. He seriously had no idea who this girl was! "Well, show me what you got, then." He then switched back to Siegfried, leading to Lucifer disappearing and using a Matarukaja to power him and the girl next to him up with one shot to the head.

With another brief, startled look and a nod, the brunette then took a stance, feeling more powerful and revving up her pink chainsaw as the sound of its engine roared. Pink letters that spelled out "Haruna" appeared on the blade. "Mystletainn! Magical power to full!" A surge of pink light formed around the girl. The bear monster was currently incapacitated due to the intense amount of shock it's been through, if the smoke coming from its body was any indication.

"Let's go! Ultimate technique!" The petite female jumped high into the air, performing many somersaults before coming down while vociferating, "Mystletainn KIIIIIIIIIIIIICK!"

'That is so not a kick,' Minato observed as he witnessed the situation in front of him. What he saw was the girl sawing through Ayumu's torso horizontally and, coincidentally, the bear monster's paw with her chainsaw after descending through the air.

Obviously, with a chainsaw currently cutting him open, Ayumu was in a deep amount of pain as he writhed violently and created agonized screams. But apparently, so was the bear. A whole lot of blood was splattering from the two of them.

"CUTTING INTO SOMEONE WITH A CHAINSAW ISN'T A KICK, YOU PSYCHOPATH!" Ayumu angrily claimed before he was sliced in half by the brunette's chainsaw. With him out of the way, the chainsaw found its way to the bear monster's head, cutting through it and the rest of its body vertically with ease. The monster then dissipated into motes of yellow light that soon vanished.

'Perhaps the Matarukaja was unnecessary...' The Persona-user thought to himself, placing his Evoker back into his pant's pocket. If anything, that skill only made the bloody spectacle more overkill.

Feeling accomplished, the brunette in pink stuck her chainsaw into the ground, crossed her arms, and said, "Ha! That may have been a little grizzly, but I got the job done."

Minato frowned and facepalmed. That was something Ikutsuki Shuji would say, and oh how Minato hated that traitor with a fiery passion. Puns now left a sour taste in his mouth. Pinching the bridge of his nose, he calmly stated, "Congrats on killing that bear."

"Heh, thanks!" The girl gave the bluenette a thumbs-up and a grin, which also showed off her fang. "Oh, by the way, what were those giant things that were behind you earlier?"

Before the blue-haired boy could answer or ignore that question, a composed voice interrupted from behind the two of them. "You two forgetting about me over here? Or did you guys mean to do that?" Confused, the girl turned behind her and noticed Ayumu lying on the ground, still in two pieces. Minato walked over to the half-sliced zombie.

"Hey, why aren't you dead, pal?" The brunette questioned. This gray-haired guy got punctured with that Megalo's claws and was bisected by her, so how was he still alive?

"Because I'm a zombie," was Ayumu's answer.

"...Hold on, you mean you're not human?" The chainsaw-wielding female deduced.

"He used to be," Minato responded for his fellow zombie while standing next to him, "but for the last month, he's been living as a zombie."

"Eeugh!" The girl made a disgusted sound from the revelation.

Although Minato didn't feel offended by that reaction because he sort of expected it, Ayumu sure felt offended.

"Show some respect for the undead," the gray-haired zombie articulated as he narrowed his eyes at the girl in pink. "So... You gonna introduce yourself to us or what?"

Placing a hand on her chest, the brunette haughtily specified, "I'm a genius Magical Garment Girl. The name's Haruna; the furball was a Megalo named Kumacchi. A big part of my grade comes from how well I can take him down, and I gotta say, I kicked major ass!"

Ayumu sweatdropped. *'Too bad it was mine. '*

Minato's curiosity was piqued. *'Megalos? They certainly don't seem like Shadows since that bear didn't decompose into a black liquid,*

but what are they exactly?

"Sorry," Ayumu began, "but if you were a real genius, you would have found a way to stop that bear-thing without cutting me in two." He then glanced up at Minato, giving him a look that signified that he acknowledged his senpai as a genius.

"Oh yeah, Mr. Smart Mouth?" Haruna pointed accusingly at Ayumu before she slowly walked up to him. "Well, I'd love to tell you you're gonna regret that, but you wouldn't remember me saying it. You know why? Because I'm gonna erase your memory." She sat near him and held out her hand towards him.

"Say what?!" Ayumu panicked.

"Wait, don't do this!" Minato insisted, holding out his hand to stop Haruna. He wasn't expecting something like this to happen!

"Don't worry and sorry, Blue, but you'll be joining this zombie in pure ignorance soon," Haruna replied. Her hand began to form a swirling pink vortex directly in front of Ayumu's face.

"No, wait!" Ayumu cried, afraid of losing his memories.

However, for some unknown reason, instead of Ayumu's memory being erased, Haruna's clothes were erased instead as they disappeared in a flash of pink light. Every single piece of clothing on her was gone without a trace.

"...!" In response, Minato immediately shielded his eyes and faced a different direction.

Ayumu, unfortunately for him, didn't look away and was presented to something that he would regret seeing in a few moments. "Your clothes... Um, where'd they go?"

"My clothes?" Haruna asked, blinking from the gray-haired teen's question. "What the hell are you talking about? I'm wearing them, you dope." She then looked down. "Wah!" She cried, blushing in embarrassment. "Crap, I'm naked!"

Anger clouding her thoughts while covering herself, Haruna proceeded to continuously stomp Ayumu's face. This was his fault! It was totally his fault! "Hey, stop gawking at me, you perv, and gimme back my powers immediately! This instant! Posthaste! Lickety-split! Nownownownownow! You dirty creep! You aren't a normal human, are you?!"

Minato didn't have to bother looking at his kouhai to tell that his face was battered and bruised. Looks like he would need a Diarahan soon since he believed that even with a zombie's regenerative ability, Ayumu's face would take a *long* time to heal.

"I told you... I was a zombie, remember?" Ayumu weakly said. His face hurt like hell. He shakily raised his arm to point towards the severed lower half of his body, which was resting on top of a gravestone near him. "Oh, and on that topic, would you mind grabbing my lower body up there for me?"

Haruna instantly stepped back from the gray-haired zombie, misunderstanding what he meant.

"Lower body?! You pervert!"

Out of vexation, Ayumu cried, "I'M NOT A PERVERT! I'M A ZOMBIE!"

'...Might be a bad time to mention that I'm a zombie, too,' Minato contemplated, still covering his eyes.

Unperceived by the intricate group of three, they were being watched from afar.

Some Time Later

"Is... everything all right, Haruna?" Minato amiably inquired, now wearing a gray T-shirt and worrying about the girl who was now

wearing the blue shirt he wore previously today in Ayumu's house.

Currently, after some time went by, Haruna, Minato, and Ayumu were sitting around the coffee table in the living room of the Aikawa residence, including Eucliwood, who decided that she wanted to continue drinking more of the tea Minato made. Haruna, wearing Minato's blue shirt, was glancing around the room with an annoyed look on her face while not making eye contact with a certain zombie that she beat up recently. Ayumu, who seemed to be just as annoyed, was frowning with his arms crossed as he wore a set of new clothes after changing out of his bloodstained ones.

Eventually, once Haruna was finished laying the smack down on the unlucky gray-haired male, Minato himself connected Ayumu's body halves to each other, and with a dose of Diarahan, Ayumu felt like a new person.

Haruna followed the two zombies back to their home because since it was supposedly Ayumu's fault that her clothes disappeared, she wanted him to compensate her for it somehow. Not only that, but she claimed that Ayumu also stole all of her "magical powers" after she made several attempts to get her clothes back by chanting an incantation that seemed like reversed Japanese words while holding her pink chainsaw.

The brunette explained that she was a "Magical Garment Girl", a person with magical powers who hailed from a place called Villiers, which was located in a parallel universe. According to her, it was the Magical Garment Girls' duty to exterminate Megalos, creatures that also came from Villiers, as a means to train themselves. Prior to meeting Ayumu and Minato, she was dispatched to eliminate Kummachi, a Megalo whose class was a B. Haruna also mentioned that her Magical Garment Girl powers can only be activated with her chainsaw. Her powers also include giving her clothes. Both of which she can't get back, apparently.

For Minato, he understood and accepted what Haruna had to say without much hesitation since he was already adapted to supernatural phenomena, like the Shadows and Nyx. Ayumu, on the other hand, had a difficult time acknowledging anything the brunette said, believing it all sounded like bullshit, much to Haruna's

frustration.

Minato was all right with having the chainsaw-wielding female come with him and Ayumu, but he had to reason with Ayumu first, saying that Ayumu had to accept responsibility for what he had done, even if it was unintentional. Haruna eagerly agreed with Minato. At his dismay, the teenager with gray hair conceded.

Due to Haruna's clothes vanishing without warning, they couldn't just walk back to the Aikawa residence as if public nudity wasn't frowned upon. When Minato and Ayumu attempted to think about what they could do to help, they came up with the idea of one of them giving at least their shirt to Haruna. However, Ayumu's shirt was still bloodied from being impaled by that bear Megalo, and the small brunette emphatically refused to wear anything from the pervert. So, as the last option, Minato politely offered his own blue shirt to the chainsaw-wielding girl, and she took it while giving him some gratitude. Incidentally, for the whole time it took to return home, the bluenette was shirtless, unintentionally showing off his thin but fit upper body. Haruna commented, on the way back, that Minato looked way more impressive than Ayumu, much to the gray-haired zombie's annoyance.

"Hmph. I'm fine, Blue," Haruna responded, sounding a bit upset. Probably because of Ayumu. "Hmm... What's your name, by the way?"

"My name's Minato," the blue-haired zombie introduced himself for the second time. He actually gave her his name a while ago on the path home, but she somehow already forgot it. What was with her attention span? Minato assumed the brunette only had a first name because of her origins, so he decided to only give away his first name to her. That, and to avoid complications of involving last names, too.

"Minato... Minato... Hmm..." Haruna mumbled the bluenette's name a few times to herself, as if trying to remember it more efficiently. "That sounds like a cool name! Do you mind if I call you Blue sometimes?"

"Um... I don't see why not." Minato shrugged. A nickname like Blue

didn't bother him in the slightest.

With a smile, Haruna nodded at the Persona-user. She then glared at Ayumu while snacking on a cookie that Minato brought to the table earlier, effectively causing the gray-haired teen to flinch. "Hey, what's-your-face."

Annoyed that she forgot his name in such a short amount of time, Ayumu replied, "My name is Ayumu."

"This is your house, right?" She asked.

"Yeah...?" Ayumu raised an eyebrow.

"Because you absorbed my magical powers," Haruna continued, "you owe me big time!"

"I didn't even know I could do that!" Ayumu stated, throwing his hands into air. If what Haruna insisted was true, then how was it possible? Was it some kind of zombie ability he had and didn't know about? "And how am I supposed to pay you back?!"

"I'll tell you how," Haruna said as she stood up. "You may be a disgusting zombie and a pervert, but until my powers return, you're gonna let me stay here!"

"So... am I disgusting, too?" Minato interjected as he held up his hand.

"Huh? What are you talking about?" The brunette asked him, wondering what he meant.

"I haven't said this yet, but I'm a zombie also," Minato answered.

Upon hearing his words, Haruna's eyes widened. "You are?!" She exclaimed, her shock at the proclamation being clear as day. She had no idea that this nice blue-haired guy was also a zombie!

The bluenette nodded in response before saying, "I can assure you, though, that other than being a zombie, I'm nothing like Ayumu."

"Hey, what's that supposed to mean, Senpai?" Ayumu raised his

voice, sounding offended from the statement.

"Well, we really aren't the same people, Ayumu, in terms of personality and mannerisms," Minato clarified smoothly. That was the least meanest thing he could think to say. It sounded a bit nicer in his mind, though. If Haruna was going to live with him, he didn't want her to hate him. Especially since he did nothing but help her.

"Oh... Well, okay then," Ayumu said, believing in his senpai's words. He knew Minato wasn't the type of person to downright insult someone, at least not on purpose. He was too cordial, in his opinion.

"Nah," Haruna finally spoke up, getting the Persona-user's attention.

Minato blinked as he looked at her. "Come again?"

Haruna grinned at him. "You're all right, Minato! Sure, you are a zombie, but I guess you're not a bad person since you helped me out. Unlike a certain pervert..." She shot a scowl at Ayumu after she said this. The target of her anger then felt as if arrows had pierced his body.

'Thank goodness.' Minato let a relieved smile show itself on his face.

"Thou art I... and I am thou... Thou hast established a new bond... Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Chariot Arcana..."

'And I was just wondering when that was going to happen,' Minato mused to himself. *'Haruna definitely seems like the short-tempered type.'*

"So... You're going to stay here?" Ayumu continued the discussion of having Haruna live with him and his housemates. Haruna nodded her head. Ayumu hesitated for a moment. "Well, um... As long as you don't disturb the neighbors, then I guess I'm okay with that arrangement."

With a satisfied smirk, Haruna added, "Plus, you'll provide me with high-quality meals, snacks, and a bedroom too."

"Now wait just a minute," Ayumu complained. Why did *he* have to do everything for this Magical Garment Girl, as if he was her personal butler? Why didn't she include Minato? Ayumu already had to take care of Eu with Minato, but now he was saddled up with more labor? How was that fair?

"And who is this chick?" Haruna questioned as she pointed at the silver-haired girl sitting across the coffee table, not letting Ayumu oppose her demands.

'It took her this long to ask that?' Minato discerned mentally. *'She's been here for over half an hour.'*

"She's a necromancer from the Underworld: Eucliwood Hellscythe, or Eu for short," Ayumu told Haruna about his master.

Throughout the explanation, Eu minded her own business as she quietly drank tea.

Everyone looked at her for a short amount of time. Haruna, satisfied with the answer she received, sat down again and said, "Oh? Really? A neckwearmancer, huh?" She then carried on munching her cookie.

'NecRO, not neckwear,' Ayumu corrected in his mind as he sweatdropped.

"Hey, Minato, can I get another cookie?" The brunette asked the Persona-user.

"You may," Minato answered kindly as he went to the kitchen to fetch a cookie for his new housemate.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Chariot Arcana..."

'...That was fast. This actually reminds me of when I ranked up my Social Link with Eu to two,' the Persona-user pondered. Seriously, what was with these girls and food?

"Thanks!" Haruna expressed her gratitude with a grin. "Oh yeah. Um, hey, what's-your-face," the Magical Garment Girl spoke directly

to the gray-haired teenager in the room, still unable to remember his name.

"Again, my name is Ayumu," Ayumu repeated with a sigh. Why the hell can she only remember Minato's name? "What is it?"

"Let me use your phone," she requested.

Before Bedtime

"This is harder to find than good equipment in Tartarus..." Minato muttered to himself. He was using Ayumu's computer to search for something that had been nagging at him for an entire month.

It was almost time to retire for the night. As of now, Minato and Ayumu were currently not in their own rooms. Eu went to bed already, and Haruna was getting adjusted to her new room in the house as she pondered about cell phones. When she asked Ayumu to use his phone, the teen gave her his cell phone, and she had no idea what it was. She told him that the phones in Villiers were "stylish" ones as she mimicked using a phone from her country that seemed very outdated to he and Minato. Ayumu then said that cell phones worked the same way. Initially awed, Haruna used Ayumu's phone to apparently call her headteacher to inform them about her situation. Minato wondered if Ayumu was going to be charged for that call. Did calls to another universe count on phone debts?

"Huh? Not tired yet, Senpai?" Ayumu asked his fellow zombie, having just finished cleaning some dishes that everybody used for snacks some time ago. He was about to shove off to his room to sleep until he noticed a head of blue hair was still in the living room.

"Yeah, I'm awake still, Ayumu," Minato said, turning to face his kouhai. "I'm just browsing on the Internet for a while before I go to sleep."

Content enough with Minato's response, Ayumu replied, "All right then. Well, I'm gonna hit the hay. Today's been a long day for both

of us, and I don't want to be tired for school tomorrow. Good night, Minato-senpai." With a small yawn, the young teenage zombie left the room.

"Night," Minato responded as he waved goodbye. He then turned back to the desktop computer, searching for news articles on websites.

Other than the occasional news of Ayumu's murderer a.k.a. the serial killer still running loose in Tokyo and one story of an adolescent boy around his age who mysteriously disappeared without a trace, nothing worth noting arose in recent past, which *completely* baffled Minato to no end.

'Surely by now someone must have found my empty grave and coffin. It's been one month since I was brought back, and Eu and I regrettably forgot to cover up our trail. So why hasn't anything related to this hit the news yet?' Minato ruminated carefully. He couldn't find anything that was associated to his disappearance, no matter how hard he looked. It just didn't make sense. *'Unless... Hold on, if word got out to Mitsuru about me being gone, then it's plausible that the Kirijo Group is keeping this information a secret to the public. And if that was the case, then... why have they not found me yet?'*

The Kirijo Group was a prosperous and distinguished corporation; possibly the most powerful in the world. Excluding the creation of the Dark Hour and the Shadow experiments they conducted ten years ago, they were the people who made extraordinary achievements, such as creating Gekkkoukan High School and Anti-Shadow Suppression Weapons like Aegis. Much of their influence was stationed in Iwatodai, but their connections stemmed far and wide to other regions. Minato knew full well that the Kirijo Group were people who weren't to be trifled with, considering their vast resources and money.

It was an odd thought, but why was it taking the Kirijo Group so long to locate Minato? They have the cash and influence to instigate a search party for him, and given how close he and Mitsuru were in the past, then it was a very likely possibility. The redheaded heir slowly ended up falling in love with him during the times they spent

alone with each other. She admitted her love for the blue-haired Persona-user after Minato took a stand against this one jerkass who wanted to marry Mitsuru for business reasons. It wouldn't surprise him if she spearheaded an operation to find him because she cared for him so much. If she did locate him, though... there would probably be an execution in order.

Let it be said that although Minato initiated and had solid relationships with the females of his Social Links last year and they consequently fell in love with him, he didn't return their feelings. He did, however, respect them. Having to deal with killing Shadows and stopping Nyx didn't provide Minato the luxury of falling in love since he believed he didn't have time to focus on his love life. He'll admit that he had been getting rather close to Aigis in January. If he didn't have to die, then maybe...

With his second chance at life, maybe now he could follow his heart's desires? Perhaps now was the time to look for a special someone?

If he was lucky, then he might find a girl who could put up with him being a zombie.

But seriously, going back to the original topic, what was Mitsuru doing for the last month?

'Never say never, but I should count myself lucky that I haven't been found so far,' Minato thought as he nodded to himself, feeling sleepy. There was no point in thinking about what-ifs, unless he wanted to become paranoid, which he will admit he was close to succumbing. He decided to mainly concentrate on his new life for now. Anywise, meeting and establishing a relationship with Haruna and fighting a huge, bipedal bear creature today made him feel tired, despite not exerting much of his strength.

Once he turned Ayumu's computer off, he switched the living room lights off and walked to his bedroom so he could rest on his bed and fall into dreamland.

Outside, as the street lights switched off systematically, a lone, tall figure stood motionlessly, grinning widely.

"Magical Garment Girl... Detected..."

The Next Day

Afternoon

Ayumu found himself letting out a sigh.

The school day for him was over, but he was sitting at his assigned desk in his classroom, staring at the approaching sunset outside through a window. Once again, because he believed the weather forecast, he was forced to wait until night arrived so that he could go home without dehydrating. He blamed himself for not listening to Minato's suggestion to bring an umbrella.

Additionally, his mind was troubled by thoughts of his unnatural life being revealed to everyone he knew, excluding Eucliwood, Minato, and Haruna, of course.

'Am I nuts?' Ayumu thought pessimistically. 'Trying to live life as a normal high school student when I'm actually one of the undead? And what happens... if everyone finds out?'

"You haven't left yet?" A familiar voice brought Ayumu out of his thoughts. The gray-haired boy turned behind him and saw Orito coming his way.

"Still here," Ayumu responded calmly to his friend.

"Dude, what's the deal yo? It's like I barely see you outside anymore."

'That's because zombies can't walk in the sun. Well, Minato-senpai can, but that's because he uses a Persona to negate that weakness,' Ayumu mused. Since he couldn't talk about his

circumstances, unless he wanted to make himself look like a fool, he told his friend, "Ah, it's these killer allergies."

"Yeah... you could still go home, though," the spiky black-haired male argued.

"Things are a little crazy there now," the zombie offhandedly said, referring to a certain brunette who began to live in his house as of yesterday.

Orito raised an eyebrow to that statement. "But... you live alone."

Ayumu frowned, realizing that he let a bit of important information slip.

"Oh! I almost forgot," Orito said, quickly forgetting about what he and Ayumu were talking about. "I got a new zombie flick! Wanna go watch it at your place?" He pulled out the movie he was talking about from his school bag.

"NO!" Ayumu, without thinking, grabbed his friend's wrist, unknowingly using more strength than necessary and causing him to hurt Orito a little. He wasn't upset from seeing the zombie movie Orito had. He just *really* didn't want anybody to come to his home.

'It's hard enough keeping a secret of the fact that I'm a ZOMBIE! But if word gets out that I'm living with two female housemates, one a necromancer, and the other a so-called Magical Garment Girl...? I'm. Screwed!' Ayumu was beginning to become very paranoid about keeping his personal life a secret from others. He didn't want people to think of him as a freak! He only wanted to maintain some semblance of a normal life.

As soon as Ayumu let go of Orito's wrist, the bespectacled student quickly placed his movie back in his bag and said, "Okay, no problem! I'm sure you've got a real good reason to say no. Some other time, then, dude! Well, see ya!" Waving goodbye and feeling flustered from Ayumu's reaction, Orito left the classroom in a hurry.

"Yeah, have a good one, old buddy!" Ayumu responded in a happier tone while waving his hand, as if his slight freak out never

happened.

"This school is spacious. Not as large as Gekkoukan, but still large," Minato noted out loud, wandering through the empty halls of his fellow zombie's school.

The reason Minato was here was because he had nothing better to do at home. He felt like checking out Ayumu's school to sate his curiosity since he never visited it in the past. He already informed Eucliwood and Haruna that he was going to retrieve Ayumu while he was out. The necromancer silently allowed it, and Haruna was too invested in watching "fascinating" TV shows to pay him any mind.

The bluenette had been on the school's campus for a while now, noticing that some students were still present inside the building and outside of it. Not much to his surprise, he caught the eyes of many female students as he passed by them. Minato, being the kind but silent person that he is, gave them warm smiles and waved, to which they blushed and sighed happily.

After having not coming across anyone in the halls for some time, Minato noticed a black-haired student wearing glasses ahead of him, who appeared to have just exited through a classroom door. Perhaps he knew of Ayumu and could tell him where he was?

"Okay, that was weird. What's up his ass?" The black-haired student wondered, looking troubled. He then saw Minato walking towards him but didn't move as he looked at the blue-haired teenager.

"Ah, hello there," the Persona-user said casually while raising a hand in greeting.

"Uh... hi?" The bespectacled student replied hesitantly. Who was this blue-haired bishōnen, and why did he want to talk to him? He didn't appear to be a student of this school. And somehow, he looked even more feminine looking than Shimomura!

"Sorry for bothering you, but do you know where Aikawa Ayumu is?" Minato asked him.

"Ayumu? Do you know him?" The black-haired male speculated, folding his arms.

Minato nodded. "You see, I'm his cousin."

"Huh?! You're his cousin?!" The student pointed at him, sounding and looking surprised as his jaw dropped.

"Uh-huh." Minato pointed at himself with his thumb. "My name is Yuuki Makoto. It's nice to meet you, person who knows Ayumu." He came up with the false name of "Yuuki Makoto" a while ago. It was meant to be used as a countermeasure if anybody asked him for his name. He deemed it very necessary. That way, no one could find out who he truly was. He wanted to hide his past, considering that one mistake he left back in Iwatodai.

He also made up being Ayumu's relative. It sounded believable.

"Oh, uh... I'm Ayumu's best friend. I'm Tulio Orito, but you can call me Orito, Yuuki-san," the boy known as Orito politely introduced himself. "Ayumu's through this door right next to me." He then rolled his eyes. "But fair warning, he seems a bit pissed off right now. Why? I have no clue."

"Is that so..." Minato said, puzzled as to why Ayumu was bothered. "Thank you for telling me where my cousin is, Orito. I appreciate it."

"Eh, no problem, man. You're my best bud's cousin." Orito grinned as he shrugged. "Well, I'm gonna head off now. Hey, you, Ayumu, and I should hang out together sometime!"

"Sounds nice." Minato gave the glasses-wearing teen a thumbs-up as he was leaving. "Bye."

"Later, Yuuki-san!" With that farewell, Orito went on his way.

Shortly after the student disappeared from sight, Minato was left alone in the halls.

'A bit naive, but Orito seems like a nice guy. And why do I have the feeling he's the same as Junpei and Kenji?' Minato thought as he ruffled his own hair. The two people he was referring to were close

friends of his before his death and were cool guys overall, but they were also perverted to an extent that would make Yukari feel disgusted and Akihiko feel ashamed.

Finished with his reminiscing, the blue-haired zombie entered the classroom that Orito directed him to. As he opened the door, he spotted his kouhai sitting near a window and looking down at the floor with a bored expression on his face.

"Ayumu."

"Hmm?" The boy whose name was called lifted his head up to where he could see the person who said his name. "Oh, hey, Minato-senpai. What are you doing here?"

Minato closed the door behind him and walked to the gray-haired teenager's seat. "I was bored at the house, so I thought I would come get you and familiarize myself with your school."

"That so? Well, all right then," Ayumu said as he got out of his seat. "To be honest, I was getting bored too. If you want, I can show you around to pass the time."

"Really? I'd appreciate that, Ayumu." Minato smiled.

"Not a problem, Senpai," Ayumu replied with a smile of his own. "Okay, let's—"

Just when the two zombies were about to leave, they heard some squeaky noises that came from one of the classroom's doors.

Through the door's window, they saw a figure's face pushing against it, as if they were trying to get inside and didn't know how to use the handle. A couple of seconds later, the figure did step into the classroom while clearing their throat in order to cover up their shame. The figure looked like an adult male who was wearing a trench coat, an ascot, gloves, and a hat. This person's appearance just cried suspicious.

"Who is this freaky old guy, and what does he want?" Ayumu asked, feeling wary. Minato braced himself as he eyed the suspicious adult with caution.

The man walked to where the two boys were and stopped, looking directly at the gray-haired zombie with a creepy grin.

"What I want, my boy, is you," the man spoke finally, and he was completely talking to Ayumu.

With that answer, Ayumu became totally unnerved, his eyes widened in fear. Minato maintained a calm disposition, despite feeling a tad dispirited.

"I want *you*..." The man continued, sounding very much like a molester and making his way towards the two teenagers.

"Oh no, does that mean what I think it means?!" Ayumu cried out frantically, dreading that he'll be molested.

"Disgusting," Minato remarked as he and Ayumu started backing away from the adult. Minato brought up his fists in a manner akin to how Akihiko would form his fighting stances. He was prepared to beat the living shit out of this molester if he had to in order to save Ayumu. He also felt a strange yet familiar vibe coming from the man. It didn't feel normal, that much he could tell.

"Now it's time... to get to the bottom of things!" The adult declared creepily.

"Waaaah!" From hearing those words, Ayumu immediately covered his butt with his hands.

"No," Minato said discourteously as he charged and delivered a swift straight punch at the trench coat-wearing man, who didn't have enough time to even register what was happening as Minato landed a blow in his gut. Letting out a gasp of pain and shock, the man then flew and slammed into the classroom's chalkboard, causing several cracks to form on the chalkboard and him to fall slowly to the floor.

"W-way to go, Senpai! You just saved my ass! Literally!" Ayumu cheered, tears of joy streaming from his eyes. Nodding at his fellow zombie, Minato assumed a stance he used to take when he had fist-type weapons equipped last year. He could only rely on his fists because one, he wasn't out to kill, and two, he didn't have any

weapons from his times spent during the Dark Hour. His hands would be sufficient enough to deal with just one old guy.

"Do you want a full-powered beat down? If so, I'll gladly give one to you," Minato coldly said to the adult, his gold eyes flaring with fearlessness.

Before the blue-haired zombie could continue his onslaught, the window near him and Ayumu suddenly opened, revealing Haruna wearing one of Minato's shirts—one that Minato didn't particularly like because it was red, and he regretted buying it — and holding her pink chainsaw, Mystletainn.

"Whoa. I like that look in your eyes, Minato," Haruna commented. "I should get that down for myself!"

"Haruna, what are you doing here?!" Ayumu exclaimed at the brunette's sudden appearance.

"That old guy over there," Haruna said as she pointed at the man Minato punched earlier with Mystletainn, who was picking himself up off the floor, "is a Megalo!"

"He is?" Minato and Ayumu then looked back at the "adult". So Megalos could disguise themselves as humans?

"Heheheheh... Looks like the cat's out of the bag." The person that Haruna claimed was a Megalo chuckled as he stood up. His body then began to convulse horribly, like something was about to hatch from it. Before long, a huge pair of claws emerged from the man's back and shredded the trench coat he was wearing as if it were paper, revealing a giant crawfish that was wearing a student gakuran, just like that Megalo, Kummachi, from yesterday.

"Eh, that thing's a crawfish?" Ayumu asked, a bit surprised by the creature in front of him.

Haruna jumped into the room, landing next to Minato and Ayumu. She then said, "Yup. A double A-class Megalo, and an incredibly diabolical one too."

"Do all Megalos resemble animals?" Minato questioned the

chainsaw-wielding girl as he looked at her.

"Every single one," Haruna answered without hesitating.

"Just wondering." Minato turned back to the crustacean in the room, which was slowly approaching he and his friends.

"Mwahahaha!" The Megalo guffawed. "I came here because I was drawn to the power of a Magical Garment Girl." It then pointed at Ayumu with a claw. "But I'm perplexed as to how that power resides in this human."

"That's gonna take a while to explain," Ayumu replied, but even he didn't know the answer to that either.

"I hate long stories!" Haruna protested.

"I wasn't talking to you!" Ayumu snapped back.

With an aside smirk, Haruna stuck her pink chainsaw into the floor, revving it up at the same time. "Super Magical Garment Change!" A pink light erupted around her.

As the surge of light enveloped her, she chanted, "*Nomobuyo, Oshi, Hashitawa, Dokeda, Gunmīcha, Dē Ribura !*"

When she finished her incantation, the light faded away, and Haruna appeared to be wearing her Magical Garment Girl outfit from last night once more. Maybe she didn't lose her powers after all!

"Waah! Oh no! Why is this happening to me again?!" She then shrieked, now naked and covering herself with her arms and dropping Mystletainn. It looked as if she did allegedly lose her powers. Her clothes vanished into particles of light very quickly. Apparently, Minato's shirt didn't come back. It was gone, too. ...Well, he didn't care too much about it, anyway.

Looking away from Haruna, Minato decided that they wasted enough time messing around. "It's okay, Haruna. Stand back. Ayumu and I will handle this."

"We will?" The gray-haired zombie interjected.

The bluenette gave him a stern look. "Are you going to let that over-sized lobster rape you?" The Megalo he was talking about complained that it was a crawfish, but Minato ignored it. Ayumu frenziedly shook his head. "Good. Now, what to do... A little Agidyne or Ragnarok, and that lobster is fried. That'd be too easy, though."

The crawfish Megalo could feel a vein pop in its head. "I'M A CRAWFISH, NOT A LOBSTER, YOU DAMN HUMAN! You may have surprised me with that strike of yours earlier, but you won't be getting the drop on me again!" At that instant, it shot off one of its claws, which propelled forward like a rocket and was heading straight for the Persona-user.

"Oh, I know what you are..." Minato calmly stated to the Megalo as he walked forward a few feet and then stood motionlessly, black shards floating out of his head.

Though she was not entirely sure what came out of Minato's head, despite seeing it last night also, Haruna alerted, "Get out of the way, Minato!"

"Heh, don't worry about him, Haruna," Ayumu informed the Magical Garment Girl composedly. He knew for a fact that there wasn't anything to worry about.

"What?! What the hell do you mean?! Minato's your friend, isn't he?! Are you just gonna let him get hurt, you jackass?!" Haruna cried angrily.

Not feeling offended by her remark, Ayumu simply said, "Just watch." Both he and the brunette then observed the altercation playing out in front of them.

The Megalo's claw sped forward with high-speed, only to be abruptly stopped as it made contact with Minato's body and dropped to the floor like a rock. Minato appeared to be unharmed from the impact.

"...I just don't care," the blue-haired zombie continued from where he left off, sounding kind of bored.

"WHAT?! How could a mere human be unfazed from an attack like

that?!" The Megalo shriled in confusion. The bluenette didn't even so much as budge from the strike. Haruna seemed to be just as stunned as she gaped.

"Well, you could say it's because I'm a zombie, but that isn't the case here." Minato took out his Evoker and raised it to his head, his finger on the trigger. For a second time, another set of black shards emerged from his head. "It doesn't matter what I'll say since you're not going to last much longer, anyway."

The crawfish laughed. "Hahaha! You're going to kill ME?! I'd like to see you tr—"

Tired of the crustacean's rant, Minato pulled the trigger.

"Persona."

The sound of glass being smashed reverberated throughout the room. A large human-like figure materialized out of thin air behind Minato, floating. Its hairstyle was nearly identical to Minato's, instead having a bright yellow color to it. Other than its head, the being's entire body seemed mechanical. A hefty lyre, which had the same color as the being's hair, was attached to its back.

Haruna, at the sight of the humanoid, could sense the raw and seemingly endless power it exuded, and she quaked in fear. Somehow, this being in front of her now terrified her more than those two beings she witnessed last night. Just what were they, and who in the world was Minato?

"Don't be afraid, Haruna," Minato reassured the Magical Garment Girl, his back still turned to her. Without having to look, he could tell she was afraid. "It's going to be alright."

"Wh-What is that?!" The Megalo asked in shock. It, too, sensed the mysterious and sudden being's power.

Minato tried his hardest to suppress a cocky grin.

"I already told you."

The being that Minato summoned, his Persona, Orpheus Telos, then

shot forward towards the crawfish, intent on smashing the crustacean with the lyre on its back. Before the Megalo could even react, Orpheus Telos swung its lyre upward and launched the Megalo up into the air. The Persona then ascended and brought its instrument down, causing the crawfish to slam into the floor and creating a sizable cavity as a result. While the Megalo was dazed and hurt, Orpheus Telos appeared next to it and executed a swift, horizontal kick, which led to the crustacean to crash into desks and to be hurled to the front of the classroom. As soon as it landed in the same spot from when Minato punched it earlier, it collapsed to the floor, almost unconscious.

"Ergh... You pretentious—" The Megalo tried to speak before experiencing an intense and sudden amount of pain from Orpheus Telos, with its instrument, bashing the Megalo on the head, blacking out in the process. Orpheus Telos then reappeared behind its summoner, continuing to be maintained.

In every possible way to look at this scenario, the blue-haired zombie was obviously winning. Ayumu and Haruna could only gaze in amazement as their housemate was prevailing in this one-sided conflict.

Minato, with Orpheus Telos, could have ended things right here and now with a Ragnarok that was powered up with a Mind Charge, but he didn't want to have the glory of killing the crawfish himself. It wouldn't feel right, to him.

"Ayumu," Minato spoke to his kouhai, but he kept his gaze on the downed Megalo.

Blinking a few times from witnessing his fellow zombie's clear edge on the battle, Ayumu hurriedly stuttered, "Wh-what is it, Senpai?"

"I don't feel like taking all the credit for finishing off this Megalo. How about we team up to end this?" The bluenette asked.

"H-Huh?!" Ayumu couldn't believe what he was hearing. "But you already seem like you can handle this without my help! I mean, what can I do compared to you?"

While it was true that all Ayumu could really do, as a zombie, was use more than 100% of his natural strength, Minato wanted to give his friend a chance in the spotlight. It was feasible that Ayumu couldn't finish the job, but if he at least contributed, then Minato would be satisfied.

"Listen up, zombie boy who isn't Minato!" Haruna began talking to Ayumu. She still couldn't remember his name? She took the classroom's curtains and wrapped herself in them since she recently lost her clothes. She had to have some type of clothing to cover her modesty. "You gotta use Mystletainn!"

Ayumu looked at her incredulously. "Your... chainsaw?"

"Yeah, since you stole my powers, you can become a Magical Garment Girl!" She informed him.

"What?! I don't wanna become a girl!" Ayumu exclaimed.

"Man up and turn into a girl to help Minato!" Haruna snapped back. The logic in her words was so convoluted, yet it made so much sense that it was actually hilarious in hindsight.

"Dammit..." Ayumu muttered bitterly as he picked up Mystletainn and braced himself. "All right then."

'Not how I was expecting Ayumu to help me, but this suffices too,' Minato thought. Now his fellow zombie had a unique power of his own. Yes, he had the power... to become a... Magical Garment Girl...

Oh, this was gonna get weird.

"Now, say it with me," Haruna ordered, probably referring to the incantation of becoming a Magical Garment Girl.

With a nod, Ayumu and the brunette both simultaneously chanted, "*Nomobuyo, Oshi, Hashitawa, Dokeda, Gunmīcha, Dē Ribura !*"

One flash of pink light later, the gray-haired zombie was found to be wearing the frilly outfit of a Magical Garment Girl that was similar in the design of Haruna's. Everything she wore last night and a few

minutes ago was accounted for on Ayumu. Yes, even the stockings. Mystletainn, the pink chainsaw, had pink letters that spelled out "Ayumu" on its blade.

"What?! Not this getup!" Ayumu said in embarrassment.

"It's gonna make you stronger and way more brave, so don't knock it, you jackass!" Haruna criticized. How dare he mock a Magical Garment Girl's uniform, especially since it looked exactly like her own.

"For real?!" Ayumu quipped.

"...What the hell am I even looking at?" was all Minato could say as he looked at Ayumu. As much as he had seen a lot of strange stuff in his life, Ayumu crossdressing was something he was definitely not prepared for.

Ayumu felt as if his ego was completely shattered. His Senpai, who was also his housemate, was now disgusted by him?

"You... look... great, Ayumu..." Minato wistfully complimented his kouhai, attempting to smile.

"That's not helping, Senpai!" Ayumu whined as he cried tears of humiliation.

"Urgh..." The two zombies and Haruna heard the Megalo grumble. It was starting to regain consciousness. "...Did anyone get the number of that kid who beat the hell out of me?"

"Zero," Minato answered flatly.

"Thank you..." The crawfish said hysterically. It then finally got its bearings straight. It now noticed that Ayumu was dressed in a Magical Garment Girl garb. "Oh...? You're a pervert, too?"

"I am NOT!" Ayumu vehemently denied. "Damn it, I'm sick to death of everybody calling me a pervert!" Enraged, he ran past Minato and swung Mystletainn down on the Megalo's remaining claw in an attempt to saw through it. The Megalo was actually getting hurt from the assault, although it was hard to tell.

"I suppose now we can end this." Minato had Orpheus Telos charge at the Megalo again while it was being distracted by Ayumu. Avoiding the Magical Garment Girl zombie, the blond-haired Persona, with its lyre, flung the giant crawfish into the air, but this time, it flew through the ceiling and went high above into the sky. "Your turn, Ayumu!" Utilizing 150% of his strength, Minato grabbed Ayumu's hand with his own two hands and quickly threw him through the hole he made in the ceiling so that the gray-haired teenager could put an end to this battle.

Unintentionally, Minato's actions caused the students of Ayumu's school who hadn't left yet to notice what was going on.

"Thanks, Senpai!" Ayumu shouted back as he became harder to see for Minato and Haruna while ascending through the air. Ayumu then caught up to the Megalo in the air, focused on killing it. "Now, what was the name of that 'ultimate technique' thing Haruna used? Let's see... Oh yeah, now I remember."

Mimicking what he saw from Haruna last night, Ayumu performed some somersaults in the air before screaming, "Mystletainn KICK!"

Instead of an actual kick, of course, he just began slicing the Megalo's head with Mystletainn, the head leaking lots of blood.

The crawfish Megalo, while in a severe amount of pain from its head being sawed, managed to say, "CUTTING SOMEONE WITH A CHAINSAW'S NOT A KICK, YOU CROSSDRESSING PERVERT!" Once its head was divided, the crustacean finally disintegrated into red particles that soon disappeared into nothing.

"I'M NOT A PERVERT!" Ayumu screamed as he plummeted from the sky, unfortunately not able to fly. A crater formed when he crashed into the ground, forming a dust cloud from the impact.

As the dust cloud was clearing, Minato dismissed Orpheus Telos, put his Evoker away, and picked up Haruna in a bridal style, to which she began to blush like mad. Minato then jumped through the hole he created by using 100% of his strength in his legs and descended to Ayumu's location while he switched to using Beelzebub, a Persona that was able to nullify Strike damage, in his

mind so he wouldn't break his legs from falling. When Minato did touch the ground, undetected by students, Haruna quickly leaped off of his arms, still blushing, and he immediately went to check on his fellow zombie.

"...That freakin' hurt," the Magical Garment Girl zombie mumbled as he rubbed his head to ease some pain.

"Are you okay, Ayumu?" Minato questioned concernedly as he reached the gray-haired zombie.

"I think so... Yeah..." Ayumu said, trying to get his bearings straight.

"What the hell...? Ayumu?" A voice asked, sounding familiar. The two zombies looked and saw Orito at the edge of the crater. They not only saw him, but a bunch of other students as well that gathered around. And they were all staring at Ayumu, who still had Magical Garment Girl clothes on.

...Well, this was bad.

'Damn, we caused too much of a scene.' Minato gritted his teeth. That fight attracted unwanted attention, something Minato wished to avoid. Now what was going to happen?

"Ew, gross!" A female student exclaimed at Ayumu's appearance.

"Is that cosplay?" One student asked.

"Wait," Ayumu started as he stood up, "it's not what you think! I can explain! Um..."

Orito was beginning to back away, an uneasy look on his face formed. "Don't tell me you're some kind of... tranny?"

As soon as the glasses-wearing student said that, every student in the vicinity whipped out their cell phones and proceeded to take pictures of Ayumu while he was still dressed as a Magical Garment Girl.

...What?

"Wait... This... I don't even... Huh...?" Minato was at a loss for words. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. Every teenager here was focused on Ayumu crossdressing, and they didn't care about seeing a giant crawfish in the sky?! What was wrong with these students?!

Not paying attention to his senpai's agitation because everyone's cell phones were snapping shots of him, Ayumu desperately insisted to the students of his school, "No! Don't look! Don't take pictures! Cut it out! You guys have got it all wrong, I swear!"

'Hide your shame, Ayumu. Hide your shame because I'm evidently surrounded by idiots,' Minato lamented inwardly as he facepalmed. He swore this stupidity was even worse than people with Apathy Syndrome! He couldn't comprehend each of these students' logic! No one at Gekkoukan High would act like these students! Hell, *Junpei*, of all people, would be more concerned about a huge crustacean monster than a crossdresser!

"Hey!" A voice shouted, which turned out to be Haruna's. Her voice managed to make the students stop taking pictures of Ayumu.

Upon seeing the brunette, Ayumu pleaded, "Haruna, please! Tell them I'm not a drag queen!"

"Listen up, folks!" Haruna grabbed everybody's attention as she pointed at Ayumu. "Ayumu, he isn't a drag queen." That answer made the gray-haired teenager feel relieved.

Minato could only sigh. He knew where this was going.

"But he is a Magical Garment Girl! Now and forever!" Haruna stated with finality.

And that was when Ayumu's jaw dropped as the brunette's last words echoed in his mind. Believing his human life and his dignity were seemingly over, all he could do then was sob as he stood motionlessly, as if his soul had left his body, and the picture-taking and rude comments began anew.

"Geez, what a pervert."

"That is so not cute."

"I thought he was cooler than this."

"Oh my god! You're some kind of magical girl now?!" Orito couldn't hide his astonishment of his best friend crossdressing and role-playing.

Haruna nodded to herself, proud that she revealed Ayumu was a legit Magical Garment Girl.

And Minato... He felt like bashing his head against a wall, without having a Persona equipped that could negate Strike damage.

Just what kind of unusual life was he dealing with here?

Meanwhile, back at the Aikawa residence, Eucliwood Hellscythe was busy drinking tea that her blue-haired servant made for her prior to leaving.

She also wrote on her notepad, [I'm hungry...]

One Week Later

Nighttime

"I couldn't get enough of your fried eggs, Haruna. They were very delicious," Minato elated as he sat in his home's living room with his two female housemates. He was having a good conversation with the small brunette in the room. Eucliwood was watching a TV show; this time it was a detective one.

"Heh, I am a genius, Blue, so you shouldn't be surprised," Haruna responded with a grin. She was happy her food impressed the bluenette. Today, she decided to whip up her special food: fried eggs. Honestly, it was the only thing that she could cook properly,

but she was pretty damn good at doing it.

A week had passed since the Megalo incidents. Nothing of note occurred in that timespan as the days went by peacefully. Ayumu returned going to his school on a regular basis. Because he was a Magical Garment Girl, he had the ability to erase memories, something Haruna tried on him before but failed. When he realized that he had this power, he deleted every one of his fellow students' memories of him crossdressing without a second thought. Despite him hating the outfit, he supposed being a Magical Garment Girl wasn't all that bad.

Minato still couldn't wrap his head around the fact that the students of Ayumu's school paid more attention to the adolescent zombie crossdressing than that over-sized crawfish that same crossdresser killed. He decided to just stop thinking about it, as he might experience his head exploding from sheer lunacy. He also chose to stay away from his kouhai's school unless he really had to go back for important reasons. He didn't know how much more he could take from being near those students.

"I'm home," a familiar male with gray hair said as he entered the living room.

"Oh hey, Ayumu." Minato greeted with a wave of his hand. "How was your day?"

"It was pretty good, Minato-senpai," Ayumu answered. *'Though I wish everybody didn't eat my lunch...'*

Haruna looked towards the student and asked, "And? So?"

"So did I enjoy eating your bento of fried eggs? Not bad for your first time," Ayumu complimented the brunette.

Haruna folded her arms across her chest and boastfully said, "I am a genius, you know."

"Well, you might wanna harness that bright power a bit more, like thinking of some side dishes. A man can't live on eggs alone, you know?" Ayumu stated.

"Shut up! Eggs are the only things I can cook, so you'll take what you can get!" Haruna proclaimed. Yes, she only knew how to cook eggs. "Besides, I bet Minato can probably live on eggs!" She then faced the blue-haired zombie in the room to get an answer.

"Hmm... I do like eggs. I think I can," Minato replied truthfully. Actually, besides meat, he enjoyed eating eggs. And considering how good Haruna was at cooking them, then he had no problem whatsoever.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Chariot Arcana..."

Haruna smiled. "See?"

"But that's just Minato-senpai," Ayumu retorted. As he left to go change in his room, he added, "He'll eat anything."

"That is true," the Persona-user confirmed. He was reminded about the times he taste-tested Fuuka's cooking that did gradually improve over time. He also thought there was absolutely nothing that could taste more worse than her initial meals.

[Minato, could you start making dinner, please?] A note with those words was held in front of Minato's face. Minato could hear his necromancer master's stomach growling, too.

"I will, Eu. It's my turn to cook dinner tonight anyway." Minato stood up to go prepare tonight's meal in the kitchen.

"I can't wait!" Haruna cheered.

"Bon appétit," Minato said with a small bow. For dinner, he cooked kimchi pork, like Ayumu did last week. The reason why was because he wanted to add his own zest to it. That, and Eu told him she wanted to taste his version of the meal.

With a feral grin and her mouth drooling, Haruna professed, "Wow... So this is kimchi pork? I can't wait to devour it!" She then laughed creepily.

"In our world, creepy laughs are kind of bad manners," Ayumu stated before he started eating.

Haruna blinked. "Oh. I guess I'm still acting like someone from another world, huh?"

"Or just plain stupid," Ayumu added, earning a glare from the brunette.

[Could I have some rice, Minato?] Eu asked her servant. [And meat.]

"Okay, anything for you, Eu," Minato responded kindly as he did her bidding.

[Do we have truffles?] She wondered.

"Hmm... Think we're fresh out of those," Ayumu answered.

While nomming on her rice, Haruna said, "I hope this helps my powers. I don't think they're back yet. I'm gonna need seconds, so give me more of your tasty white stuff!" She then held out her empty bowl of rice towards Minato since he was the closest to the rice cooker.

"Alright, give me a moment, Haruna," Minato replied, grasping her bowl, filling it with steamy and warm rice, and giving it back to her.

"Thanks, Minato!" Haruna praised as she began to scarf down on her rice.

"So, since you said your powers haven't returned, does that mean you'll be staying here longer?" Minato wondered. She had been living with him, Ayumu, and Eucliwood for a week, and he was curious as to how long she planned to stick around.

"Sure does, Blue, so make with the thirds!" Haruna declared, holding out her bowl for more rice.

"Oh, me too, Senpai," Ayumu chimed in.

Eu also needed more rice, saying, [I may need a bigger bowl.]

Feeling the amiable atmosphere, Minato let a faint smile adorn his face. This was nice. He really did feel as if everyone here was acting like a real family.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Fool Arcana..."

"Well, if you guys need anything else, name it and I'll serve it," the blue-haired teenager annunciated in a bright tone, something he barely ever did but he couldn't help himself.

"In that case, I'd like some miso soup, please."

"Sounds good..." Minato trailed off and blinked. He heard a feminine voice, one that he didn't recognize. Whose voice was that?

When he looked in front of him, an attractive girl, in Minato's opinion, with long, black hair tied into a ponytail appeared out of nowhere, seating herself between Eucliwood and Haruna. She had green eyes and wore a cloak over her shoulders. She also was... very well-endowed. She wore a yellow sleeveless blouse with thin shoulder straps on her person that emphasized her... proportions, accompanied with blue jeans that were supported by a belt. Leaves were whirling around the living room, like she entered with them.

"Um... Miso soup, right?" Minato asked the newcomer for confirmation.

"Yes, please." She nodded her head.

"Another one, huh? Great..." Ayumu muttered in displeasure.

Despite not knowing who this mysterious black-haired girl was, Minato decided to be cordial and made what she asked him for. It didn't take him long to whip up some miso soup for her as she waited patiently. By the time she finished eating, everyone at the table, except Eu, was done with their dinners too.

"How was it?" Minato wondered how his soup tasted.

"It was quite delicious. You're an excellent cook," the female stranger commented, wiping her mouth with a napkin. Minato acknowledged the polite compliment with a nod.

'Bossy like Eu and Haruna, but at least she gives compliments,' Ayumu noted mentally.

"Anyone mind telling me who this chick is?" Haruna asked as she pointed at the unknown guest.

"Actually, I kind of assumed she was one of your friends," Ayumu speculated. He turned to Eu, who was eating what was left of her rice with her chopsticks. "So, do you know who she is?"

The small necromancer didn't respond as she ate.

"...Okay, I'll go ahead and take your silence as a 'no'. Do you know who she is, Senpai?"

"I don't know her either," Minato answered honestly, shrugging at the same time. Like Haruna and Ayumu, and perhaps Eu, he was also curious about the black-haired girl.

"Hmm." Ayumu crossed his arms. "Listen, lady, no one here knows who you are, so do you mind introducing yourself?"

"Very well then. Since you insist..." The dark-haired girl began. "My name is Seraphim."

Remembering what he learned in class recently, Ayumu said with a bit of excitement, "Whoa, you're an angel?"

Ignoring what the zombie said, Seraphim continued, "I am a practitioner of the Swallow Return Strike. My special skill is the Swallow Return Strike, and my hobby is the Swallow Return Strike."

"...Well if you're that into it, it must be pretty freaking awesome, then," Ayumu deduced unenthusiastically. He genuinely didn't have a clue as to what she was talking about.

"What brings you to this dump?" Haruna asked.

Seraphim set her eyes on the necromancer at the table, who was sipping her warm tea. "I was dispatched here to enlist the aid of Lady Eucliwood Hellscythe. I've been charged to not only do that, but accompanying Lady Hellscythe back to my village as well."

"And where's that?" Ayumu couldn't help but ask.

"The Village of Ninjas," Seraphim stated.

'And here, ladies and gentlemen, is this week's girl with abnormal abilities,' Minato teased inwardly. Even after being introduced to Seraphim, he felt like nothing was going to surprise him at this point.

"Oh, I was totally about to guess that," the gray-haired zombie deadpanned, clearly not amused. "So if you're from there, does that mean you're a ninja?"

"Yes," Seraphim admitted, "and actually more. I'm a vampire ninja."

Ayumu narrowed his eyes. "*A vampire ninja ?*" He repeated doubtfully. He had met a zombie prior to becoming one himself, a necromancer, a Magical Garment Girl, and he was now in the presence of a vampire ninja? What was he going to meet next in the future? A female android that can shoot bullets?

His attention and Minato's were redirected to the sound of Eu's pen tapping against the coffee table. They both saw the note she had written just now. It said, [Minato, Ayumu. I don't care. Send her away.]

"And how are we supposed to kick out a vampire ninja?" Ayumu asked her.

Eu tapped her pen again, meaning that she repeated her words to her servants.

Ayumu sighed. He and Minato didn't exactly know what they could do to make the vampire ninja leave.

"Tell me, what exactly is yours and the one with blue hair's relationship with Lady Hellscythe?" Seraphim wondered.

Before Ayumu could have another one of his "Eu fantasies" or sound perverted, Minato said, "We're her servants, Seraphim."

The vampire ninja nodded at the bluenette. "Then please, allow me to become your servant, too," Seraphim urged the necromancer. "You may address me as Sera, if you wish, my lady."

Eu then wrote to Sera, stating, [Two is enough.]

"Please, reconsider," Sera insisted. "Allow me to at least replace the lowly maggot who has gray hair since I am far more intelligent and capable than he is. I will be your servant, along with the blue-haired one."

Minato couldn't help but feel intrigued by her remark. *'Weird. She doesn't hate me. I wonder why.'*

"...Wait. Why only me?!" Ayumu exclaimed. Why was he always the target of girls' ire?!

"Because, maggot, I can tell the blue-haired one is a far superior person compared to you," Sera retorted harshly.

In all honesty, Minato was not expecting an answer like the one Sera had just brought to the table. Sera's commendation kind of flattered him a little. The bluenette did feel bad for Ayumu, though, since the second-year student was getting so much hate for reasons unknown.

"...You didn't have to say it like that," Ayumu murmured, feeling small and pushing his two index fingers together.

"Since it appears you are the stubborn type who will not surrender their post willingly, maggot, I suggest we take this matter at somewhere more private," the vampire ninja declared.

Putting on a more serious face, Ayumu sternly looked at Sera.

"I'm real sorry to disappoint you, but I make it a habit not to fight girls," Ayumu argued. "And I have a feeling Minato-senpai doesn't like to fight girls either."

"You both will," Sera dissuaded, including Minato in this near future fight, apparently, "and I shall make perfectly clear to Lady Hellscythe which of us is more suited to be her servant. If you both lose, then I shall replace you, maggot."

Minato remained silent while Seraphim spoke. She sounded very serious about becoming a servant of Eu's. Why? He didn't know, but it looked like he was in for an unavoidable battle, yet again.

Ayumu frowned before sighing. Why did this have to happen?

Although Seraphim was the one who challenged the two zombies, she allowed them to choose where their battle would take place. Minato didn't have a place in mind, so he let Ayumu choose. The gray-haired zombie eventually decided on going to that graveyard where he and Minato met Haruna for the first time. The atmosphere of that area made him feel more relaxed.

Prior to reaching their destination, Minato transitioned from using Beelzebub to Siegfried while he thought no one was watching, in case he needed a Masukukaja for himself and Ayumu. Hopefully this time the gray-haired teenager could actually dodge with a speed increment. Or better yet, just dodge in general.

After some minutes had passed, the three of them arrived in the cemetery, with Haruna coming along as a spectator because she had nothing better to do. She brought some cookies as snacks to eat while she spectated.

Eu elected to stay home for this match. She didn't bother to go see who would prevail. She already knew what was going to happen.

Minato and Ayumu stood across from Seraphim, each of them assessing the vampire ninja. Sera was assessing the two zombies herself, but she seemed to be more fixated on Minato, for some reason. The three were neutrally silent for a period of time.

'What Persona should I use against Seraphim? I need to analyze her fighting style before I know which one would be more effective,'

the Persona-user contemplated to himself. He hadn't seen the vampire ninja in action yet, nor did he know about what kind of weapons she used. It was stereotypical, but he considered the possibility of her using shurikens, maybe even a blade of sorts. Perhaps a Persona that could negate Slash damage would suffice? He seriously wished he had one of his weapons from his Shadow-killing days.

Haruna, deciding she was tired of waiting, spoke up as she sat on a tombstone. "Hey."

"Relax, we've got this," Ayumu pronounced almost arrogantly.

"I wasn't offering to help. I just want you and Blue to get this thing started already," Haruna replied as she gave the gray-haired zombie a flat stare.

Ayumu looked at her incredulously. "I'm sure I'm not the first to tell you this, but you're a real piece of work."

"Taking your eyes off me is dangerous, maggot," Seraphim elucidated to Ayumu.

"If you think you're just gonna be able to kill me, I've got some pretty disappointing news for you," Ayumu affirmed as he focused on the vampire ninja again. What could she do? He couldn't die because he was a zombie!

"If completing my mission means killing you, then I shall," Sera made clear with no hesitation. "Even if it is a bit trickier, seeing as how you're one of the undead."

Now that just made things more atypical. How in the world did Sera know about Ayumu's condition?

"How do you know he's part of the undead, Seraphim?" Minato calmly asked her, perplexed. He was pretty sure no one mentioned anything related to Ayumu being a zombie.

Seraphim's green eyes altered into glowing red ones before she said, "Ninjas know everything." *'And I even know about you,'* she briefly mused to herself. A light breeze passed through the area,

leaves scattering about.

Minato and Ayumu readied themselves, guessing their battle was about to start soon.

"I'll slice you until you're incapable of fighting," Sera declared, a sword made purely out of leaves forming in her hand.

"Hmm... Should I, or should I not?" Minato pondered aloud, deciding what to do to prepare himself.

"Um... You do know that zombies can feel pain, right?" Ayumu questioned anxiously. *'Oh man... Why do I have a bad feeling about this?'*

Sera pointed her leaf katana towards the two zombies, primarily at Ayumu, and announced, "Spare yourself and yield!"

With an uneasy grin, Ayumu replied, "Sorry, no can do because me and Minato-senpai were asked to send you away."

"All right... So be it!" The vampire ninja charged forward with speed that slightly surprised Minato, but he managed to avoid her assault with ease by jumping to the side. However, he didn't notice that she was going straight for Ayumu, and the gray-haired zombie began to dodge some of her slices, albeit a bit sloppily.

After Ayumu dodged a few of Seraphim's slashes, Minato noticed that she managed to cut through a gravestone that was made of solid stone. Now he knew her leaf blade was the real deal.

Seraphim then disappeared, vanishing with leaves that traveled through the air. As Ayumu's and Minato's vision darted in various directions to locate her, from somewhere, she proclaimed, "I'm a practitioner of the Swallow Return Strike. My special skill is the Swallow Return Strike. And my hobby...?"

"AAAUGH!" Ayumu suddenly screamed. Minato quickly turned to witness Sera horizontally bisect Ayumu through his waist, effectively dividing the zombie into two halves.

"...That's right. The Swallow Return Strike!" Sera finished as she

observed one of her opponents falling to the ground into two pieces.

"Brutal!" Haruna commented from afar, crushing the cookie that was in her hand in excitement.

"Ayumu!" Eyes widened, Minato rushed to the severed upper half of his friend's body.

"If that pitiful excuse was all the fight you could muster up, then you aren't worthy of being Lady Hellscythe's servant, you undead maggot!" Seraphim ridiculed, the redness in her eyes fading back to green. "At this rate, I will replace you as Lady Hellscythe's servant!"

'She's certainly not pulling her punches,' Minato thought as he reached Ayumu. "Hey, can you hear me?"

"Eh... ugh..." Ayumu grumbled, still in pain from being sliced. He then looked up at Minato, his eyes filled with sadness. "I'm sorry, Senpai... I couldn't... be of much help to you... I'm... useless..." He said sadly, looking as if he was on the verge of tears.

The blue-haired zombie shook his head. "No, you're not. In fact, you did help me. You put up a good fight, Ayumu," he reassured his fellow zombie sympathetically. "Take it easy, now. I'll handle this from here."

"Senpai..." Ayumu gave the bluenette a warm smile.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Temperance Arcana..."

"Hey, what's the deal with you singling me out?!" Ayumu then angrily shouted at Seraphim. Why did it always have to be him who gets horribly injured?

"You aren't worth the trouble, you filthy maggot," Sera responded bluntly. Her eyes were then focused on the other zombie in the area. "Besides... I am more interested in him."

"Me?" Minato pointed at himself. Why was she so interested in him?

Sera nodded. "I feel that you will offer more of a challenge than that

maggot you're comforting. I know this."

'Does that mean she knows I can summon a Persona?' Minato deliberated. He then shook his head. That didn't matter. What did matter was that he had to defeat Seraphim now and swiftly. He *really* didn't want to have to hit a girl. It would make him feel terrible if he did.

"So, will you face me by yourself?" Sera asked the Persona-user.

Taking a deep breath, Minato faced the vampire ninja. "It's been a long time since I had to give it everything I got," he stated. Truthfully, last week, he barely used much of his strength when fighting those two Megalos he and his friends encountered. Sera truly might give him a challenge that he had to take seriously.

"I've been holding back as well," Sera replied, readying a well-disciplined stance as she held her leaf blade, prepared to strike.

Without further hesitation, Minato retrieved his Evoker from his pocket, holding it against the side of his head. Seraphim merely watched and waited in amusement.

"Go get her, Minato!" Haruna yelled encouragingly.

"Have at her, Minato-senpai," Ayumu said from behind.

'Thanks, Haruna, Ayumu.' The blue-haired zombie smiled briefly. "Persona."

Followed by uttering that word, the Persona known as Siegfried appeared behind Minato, casting a Masukukaja on him and then disappearing. Black shards floated out of Minato's head a second later.

At first, Sera seemed startled upon seeing the famed hero who hailed from Norse mythology, but she instantly regained her composure.

"Are you ready?" Minato asked.

"One question before we start: Do you think that you can win against

me?" Sera inquired him with a question of her own.

"I don't think I can win. I *know* I can win," the blue-haired zombie answered back candidly.

Seraphim smiled to herself before her eye color changed to red.

"Very well then. Come at me!"

With boosted speed, Minato blasted forward as Sera did the same. As soon as the two were in close proximity of each other, the vampire ninja swung her sword horizontally but hit nothing. Immediately lifting her head up, she saw Minato, who had jumped into the air, and he was waving at her in a carefree manner and holding his Evoker to his head. Confused at first, Sera then noticed a large white gloved hand about to snag her when she looked down. On instinct, she retreated a few feet back to escape. Upon closer inspection, she could fully see a figure that wore dark clothing and had a beak-like helmet with a hinge located at the jaw, and it was wielding quite a large sword. She noted that the being surrounded itself with coffins that were connected by chains.

"Tch." Minato clicked his tongue. Seraphim was evidently agile enough to dodge Thanatos at close range. He thought that even if he did command the Greek god of death to charge at the vampire ninja, she would still be able to avoid it. As he was momentarily in the air, Minato tried to think of something to catch Sera off guard. When he did come up with an idea, he mentally ordered Thanatos to toss him its blade. With a silent nod, Thanatos threw its sword to Minato.

"What does he think he is doing? He can't possibly wield a blade as large as that," Sera commented as she glanced upward, unsure of what the Persona-user planned on doing.

'In a sense, I will have to borrow their ultimate technique,' Minato thought. "200%." Performing some somersaults in the air, as Thanatos's sword was about to reach him, the blue-haired teenager lifted one of his legs up and kicked the blade down at the bottom of its hilt with his increased strength, although slightly injuring himself in the process. At a high velocity, Thanatos's sword was then sent

careening towards the vampire ninja on the ground as it spun continuously.

"Huh?!" Not expecting a method like what she just witnessed, Seraphim barely avoided becoming skewered as Thanatos's blade stuck itself in the ground from where she was originally positioned at.

"Behind you." Minato warped behind Seraphim as she was being distracted. He was still experiencing the effects of Masukukaja, and he tried to land a kick from behind. Before he could land one, however, Seraphim suddenly sprouted devil-like wings from her back and ascended to the sky by leaping backwards as Minato missed hitting his opponent.

"Impressive display, but now it is my turn. Let us see how you'll handle this!" Sera said as she raised her leaf blade. "Swallow Return Strike!" Red crescent energy blasts shot forward as she slashed her sword multiple times.

This vampire ninja was full of surprises, Minato had to admit. He was seemingly wide open. It didn't look as if he would be able to avoid Sera's energy attacks.

"Oh no!" Haruna cried.

Her worry was for naught, in the end, as Thanatos appeared in front of Minato to shield him and took the blasts head-on. Upon impact, the blasts merely damaged the Greek god of death a little since it can resist Slash attacks.

'Hmm... That creature appears to be unfazed by my strikes,' Sera examined as she levitated in the air. 'I doubt I will gain any advantage just by slashing from afar. I will have to approach him at close range in order for —'

While the vampire ninja was busy contemplating, Minato had Thanatos return to the sea of his soul, along with its blade, and switched Personas again. With the one he recently switched to, it would knock Seraphim out of the sky.

"Norn," Minato said as he shot himself, and a burst of black energy surrounded him. A being, whose entire body was gold, materialized behind Minato. It looked like it was a statue of three women, whose bodies encircled the clock it had with it. The Persona, Norn, the goddess of fate, then created strong gusts of wind that rippled throughout the cemetery, stirring up leaves and dust into the air.

Feeling the severe currents affecting her flight, Sera was forced to land as the wind caused her to fall uncontrollably, but that didn't stop her from attempting to slash Minato with her energy attacks. The wind, however, induced the blasts to miss their target as they went in miscellaneous directions.

Minato ran forward to where Sera was going to touch down, unleashing some extra strength with his zombie ability and intending on delivering a corkscrew punch as Norn kept flaring her Magarudyne to keep the vampire ninja off balance.

"Nice try," Minato informed as Sera was about to fall head-first to the ground, aiming his fist at her torso and dismissing Norn. Another set of black shards escaped from his head.

"Hn." The vampire ninja smirked, which confused the blue-haired teenager.

As soon as Minato was about to make contact with Sera's body, a puff of smoke was released, and Minato found himself punching a wooden log instead of a female. From the force of his attack, which the bluenette tried to hold back on, the log was promptly launched and slammed into an obscure part of the graveyard.

"Where did she go?" Minato lost sight of Sera due to her use of ninjutsu to escape. He looked around and couldn't locate her anywhere.

"Over here!" Lifting his head up, Minato saw the vampire ninja quickly flying towards him, prepared to slash him with her sword. Sera slashed diagonally, but Minato hastily evaded her attack by crouching down, a single strand of his blue hair being the only thing that was cut. Slamming his palms onto the ground, Minato used them for support as he kicked Sera in her abdomen, sending her

upward.

Nimbly getting back on his feet with a front flip, Minato pressed the trigger of his Evoker again once he raised it to his head. "Orpheus Telos. Maragidyne."

Seraphim regained her balance in the air, but she decided to descend to the ground and retract her wings, thinking that she would be at a disadvantage if she remained aerial. She tried to determine what Minato was trying to do next. This time, she saw him summon a humanoid being with a hairstyle reminiscent of its summoner that appeared to be playing the lyre it retrieved from its back. But when the being finished playing its instrument, nothing happened. No energy blasts of any kind were fired at her immediately, and it didn't look like Minato did anything to get near Seraphim. What did he just do?

"You should probably take a look around you, Seraphim," Minato called out to her, waving at her with the Evoker in his hand.

Perplexed as to what he was talking about, the vampire ninja listened to his words and found a multitude of fireballs that were almost as large as her, all of them suspended in the air as they surrounded her in every direction she glanced in.

"Nowhere for you to hide. Do you yield?" Minato asked Sera with Orpheus Telos levitating behind him. He really didn't want to have every single one of the Maragidyne fireballs converge on her. This was solely a stratagem he thought of to have her admit defeat. Now the question was whether or not she would take the bait.

Sera carefully surveyed her surroundings once more. She smiled and then quickly threw something at Minato, who was sincerely not anticipating any projectiles.

At that instant, Minato immediately found an emerald shuriken stuck to his forehead, his fiery ruse and Persona disappearing due to him losing concentration from sudden pain. Naturally, he winced. He also let go of his Evoker when it flew off of his hand after being hit. Minato's blood started to drip down on his face. Sera's shuriken didn't hurt him as much as he thought it would, possibly because he

had Orpheus Telos as his current Persona. It was rather convenient for Orpheus Telos to resist everything.

'I was too careless. I shouldn't have dropped my guard like that. Where is she now?' Minato gritted his teeth, now feeling a tad ashamed. Sera had used Minato's injured daze to vanish again. He couldn't believe he let her do that! If he didn't find her soon, she would end up slicing him like she did to Ayumu! Up to this point in time, after becoming a zombie, he had never lost a limb at all, and he would very much like to keep it that way.

'Wait... This may be my chance...' Minato instantly realized a golden opportunity.

"It's over!" Seraphim reappeared in Minato's blind spot in a rustle of leaves, already swinging her leaf katana at him. Minato attempted to dodge by jumping away, but he felt his foot hurt when he put some force into it. It was the same foot he used from when he kicked Thanatos's sword earlier, and it still hadn't healed. Seraphim was so close to him, it seemed like he didn't have time to avoid her or use his Evoker to summon a Persona to shield him.

Haruna leaned in a bit closer from her spot, eager to see how this will turn out.

'Gotcha in my sights,' Minato mentally remarked, as he remembered which Persona he was using right now.

"Swallow Return Strike!" Saying the name of her favorite technique once more, Seraphim swung both of her arms as she tightly gripped her blade. Minato raised up one of his arms in defense. Seraphim noticed this but continued her assault. "A good effort, but my Swallow Return Strike will render that arm of yours useless!"

Seraphim was expecting her Swallow Return Strike to cleave through Minato's arm, effectively leaving him wide open to be sliced with nothing else left to protect him. After all, it was strong enough to cut through solid rocks. With this, she would be able to become Eucliwood's servant. Compared to the maggot she downed earlier, her current opponent was a worthy one indeed, and she respected him for offering such an entertaining challenge.

However, despite seeing blood from Minato's arm being cut, it didn't sever like Sera had thought it would, and her leaf katana became halfway embedded in Minato's arm as he forcefully pressed on, his determination evident in his gold eyes.

Sera's eyes, Ayumu's, and Haruna's widened.

"H-How?!" Sera exclaimed, unable to comprehend what was transpiring.

"It's because I'm a Persona-user and a zombie!" Minato responded, ignoring his injury as he took the opportunity to headbutt Sera while she was distracted and strike in her abdomen with a 100%-powered straight punch, letting it fly without restraint. Instinctively, the vampire ninja shut her eyes as she was injured and pushed back with an intense amount of force, sending her flying towards a gravestone as she inched closer to it by the second.

...But she never collided with it.

When Seraphim re-opened her eyes, which had turned back to their normal green, she saw herself being held in a bridal style by Minato, who displayed a relieved smile at her. Because he had his speed increased, Minato managed to catch Sera just in time before she came into more harm and his Masukukaja effects left him entirely.

"Are you all right?" Minato wondered worriedly, slightly avoiding Sera's gaze. "Sorry for hitting you. It was the only thing I could think of to end our fight. I... never really wanted to hurt you, Seraphim... I will admit, though, that our fight was enjoyable. You're pretty amazing as a vampire ninja."

'As I expected...' Seraphim thought to herself, showing a satisfied smile and having her leaf katana dematerialize into leaves that proceeded to be blown away as a breeze passed by.

"Can you stand?" Minato asked her, looking into her eyes.

Sera nodded. "Yes, I can." The blue-haired adolescent gently lowered her so she could stand on her own two feet. As she stood on the ground, she noticed Minato's arm was bleeding from her

attack earlier, a noticeable gash in it, along with the shuriken she threw at his head. "Ah... your injuries."

"Hmm? These?" Minato looked at his injured arm and glanced at his forehead. He waved his hand dismissively. "Oh, I'll be fine." In a short timespan after he said that, his arm slowly but miraculously healed, appearing good as new. Lastly, Minato removed the shuriken from his head and the injury there healed also. Being a zombie and utilizing Orpheus Telos's Victory Cry were definitely advantageous. Minato hesitantly returned the shuriken to Sera, initially not certain as to whether or not she wanted it back. She took it back without wavering.

'So he can heal himself at a remarkable pace... I see... That's a relief,' Sera mused, feeling a bit of guilt leaving her.

"Hey, Minato!" The blue-haired zombie and the vampire ninja turned to see Haruna approaching them while dragging Ayumu's upper body by his hand. She didn't bother to combine him to his lower half yet?

"Haruna, hey." Minato waved to the Magical Garment Girl.

"That was so cool what you did there at the end!" Haruna said excitedly. "I thought for sure you were going to end up like Ayumu!"

For a moment before the duel concluded, Minato thought the same as well.

'I honestly didn't think my arm would handle Seraphim's Swallow Return Strike, considering what it did to Ayumu. But I was fortunate to have Orpheus Telos as my Persona back there,' Minato ruminated. He will admit he took a huge gamble on letting Sera approach him, but in the end he realized that the vampire ninja was continually hounding him with close-ranged attacks. And at least it worked out with Orpheus Telos's resistance capabilities. Minato's eyes flickered towards his fellow zombie. "How are you feeling, Ayumu?"

"Well... I've been better, but I guess I'll be fine once someone decides to link me together," Ayumu replied while giving Haruna

some glares. At the very least, he wasn't going to be replaced as Eu's servant. "Anyway, that was a good fight, Senpai. I'm glad you won."

"Thanks." Minato turned to Seraphim, who was oddly and intently staring at him. "So... What do you plan to do now, Seraphim?"

"I've already made my decision, Arisato Minato," Sera responded politely. "Though, I must apologize for injuring you during our battle."

With those words voiced, it did not take long for Minato and Ayumu to realize that something was truly wrong with this picture.

'Wait, she already knows his last name? Did Minato-senpai ever say it to her? I don't think he did,' Ayumu pondered as he noticed something was off, trying to think back if Minato's last name was ever uttered near the vampire ninja.

"...You can forget about my arm and head, Seraphim. It's alright, I forgive you. But how do you know my last name? Do you know me?" Minato inquired, legitimately feeling perplexed as he perceived Sera having knowledge of his last name.

"Indeed," Sera started, "because you are a Messiah of this world. And due to the fact that you have soundly defeated me in combat, I am now your humble servant." She bowed courteously before the bluenette and spoke with a noticeably respectful tone.

"Pleased to be at your service, Minato-sama," Sera said to Minato as she showed her beautiful smile.

Minato could only stare at Sera blankly, as did Ayumu and Haruna, whose jaws were dropped.

"...Huh?"

"Thou art I... and I am thou... Thou hast established a new bond... Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Fortune Arcana..."

Iwatodai

"Ah, I'm glad you came," Kirijo Mitsuru said as a small figure entered her office. "I'm sorry you had to come all the way here so we could discuss this, but this is a matter that shouldn't be discussed over the phone. This matter... This matter is something important that is related to me."

"May I ask what it is?"

"You will know soon. In fact, it might be better for you if you read this." Mitsuru handed over an envelope, containing several amounts of details of what she, her corporation, and her friends could gather on the inside.

The words "Arisato Minato" were written on the envelope.

Shirogane Naoto's eyes, for a moment, faltered upon seeing the name, but she smiled to herself.

Finally, some closure.

"I sense a case in the making."

Next: Chapter 4: Halcyon Days of the Dead

Social Links:

Fool (members of Ayumu's house): Rank 4

Chariot (Haruna): Rank 3

Fortune (Seraphim): Rank 1

Death (Eucliwood Hellscythe): Rank 4

Temperance (Aikawa Ayumu): Rank 4

A/N: Hi, everyone! Sorata Shioya here, and may I say what a chapter this was to write! It's the largest one I've ever written at this point, which I feel sort of proud of. What did you all think of this chapter?

This story is apparently getting popular as of late. Not really sure why... I guess I'm being a bit pessimistic, am I? Many of you enjoy it, so I must be doing something right.

To some, I'm sure, Ayumu had some focus in the earlier part of this chapter, and he went through a lot of abuse. Like I said, he's still an important character, not just a complete punching bag, physically and mentally. He has to... set himself apart from everyone instead of just being a total side/support character. It's all significant to his character development. Also, yes, I'm aware that Eu wasn't shown much this time around, but this chapter's main focus was introducing Seraphim and Haruna, along with establishing some development for Minato and Ayumu. Don't be afraid because next chapter will have everybody spending time with each other.

I've read the light novel, manga, and watched the anime versions of *Is This a Zombie?*, but I'm mostly following the anime for now because of its ridiculous amount of black comedy that it handles well. So, for those of you who dislike seeing Ayumu abused, take caution. Do not get me wrong. I love Ayumu (no homo) as a character, but I find him more fascinating in the anime because even with the shit he goes through, he somehow comes out to be awesome.

So, about this story being a multi-crossover: some say yes, some say no. It's pretty much split down the middle. There were some good arguments as to what would be right.

I've decided that *A Necromancer's Wild Card* won't be a multi-crossover after much thinking and debating. Thanks to everyone who gave their opinions, which helped me decide!

Thanks for reading! As always, reviews are very much appreciated!

Also, yes, I will be giving Minato a vampire ninja wife. ...Though I can assume most of you will know who it will be.

Update: A few of you have been asking when this story takes place. As of the end of this chapter, it's May 2010. So the events of A Necromancer's Wild Card occur a year before the events of Persona 4. I also went and altered some of the dialogue and added a few words here and there. Nothing too drastic changed.

Reviewers:

Ilat-2 & Darklight of the 0 arcana: Did this chapter answer your question?

BruceNadeauJr: Thanks for your words, sir!

Argorok: It wasn't soon, but I hope you like this chapter!

SilverIceRing: He will get one! And thanks for your review!

Nunas The No Name: Oh, stop. You're making me embarrassed. I appreciate your words!

Kinunatzs: Ayumu as a Persona-user? Maybe.

crazie194: True, Minato's past Social Links are unbreakable. I never said they weren't.

Sixth Ranger BetaHalo: All the way to the events of Arena, huh? It does sound plausible...

Sacchin: Well, they brought in a certain someone to help them!

The bradavol: I get what you mean because I see that a lot in most fanfics I read. Yeah, Japan does have a common practice of cremation for the dead, but that doesn't necessarily mean every person in Japan uses that practice.

Seeker213: Did you catch the reference?

Kibou no Nanaya Zero: Wow... Thanks for your detailed review! It did help me become motivated in making this chapter. Also, this chapter was so long already, I didn't want to include any omakes. Perhaps in the future!

Obersturmfuhrer: Thank you for your review! It made me think about many things for this story's future.

rubytiger & Guest: Sorry, but it's unfortunately not.

HellKing666: Maybe.

Mr. Haziq: I recognize you! Nice to see you here, and thanks for your words!

Driliviel 2: Souji/Yu might make an appearance! Thank you for your words!

Slyr3x: Yes, it would be fun if he did. Yes... and no. Now that'd be a sight to see.

ZairiX: Well, sadly no kisses were in this chapter.

Halcyon Days of the Dead

Chapter 4: Halcyon Days of the Dead

"To truly live, you will need to make changes sometimes." — Kirijo Mitsuru

?

A familiar sight greeted him.

He found himself in a room that he knew all too well and had not been to for quite a long time.

It was difficult to forget about a location where the decor was enriched with blue velvet and one of the residents in the room that had an unforgettable, unique appearance. Specifically one with a long nose.

After so long, Arisato Minato had returned to the Velvet Room.

Though he did not know as to why he came back now, of all times. He remembered himself falling asleep when the excitement that transpired upon a certain vampire ninja's arrival had exhausted itself. He never expected to revisit the Velvet Room while he had been dreaming, considering how much time had passed since his last visit.

The Velvet Room appeared to be the same as Minato had remembered it. The design of the room was still reminiscent of a grand elevator. Igor was seated on the same large, blue couch as before, behind a circular table that was draped with blue tablecloth. The various sets of doors on the left and right sides of the Velvet

Room that were present in the past had remained. Though wherever they led to, Minato still did not have a proper answer, for he never inquired about them. One notable difference Minato remarked inwardly was that the Velvet Room was descending at a moderate pace, contrary to the continuous ascension that it had performed throughout his last journey. Additionally, the immense clock that was integrated in the back of the room appeared to be at a standstill. Neither of its hands were in motion as both pointed upward towards twelve.

Also, and most importantly, Elizabeth was nowhere to be seen.

As he sat on a chair, Minato greeted the master of the Velvet Room, "Hello, Igor."

"It's so nice to see you again, my young guest," Igor responded with his perpetual grin. "Welcome back to the Velvet Room."

In all honesty, Minato was perplexed as to why he had returned to this place that transcended both dream and reality, mind and matter.

If there was any moment in time in which he had expected to be summoned to the Velvet Room again, it would have been right after he and Eucliwood departed from Iwatodai back in April. Because he had established a Social Link with the necromancer, he thought that it was fair to assume that he was on a new journey, albeit an immensely unusual one. Just like when he was brought to the Velvet Room the day before the giant Shadow of the Magician Arcana had made its first and last appearance, he believed he would have been re-summoned prior to his life becoming more insane. It was a hypothetical pattern that would have followed a logical sequence events.

Of course, as of now, Minato definitely knew that his inference was proven false due to the fact this was the first time he came to the Velvet Room since January 31st.

"How come I can still come here?" The blue-haired boy voiced his confusion to the proprietor of the Velvet Room.

"Your confusion is understandable, especially since our contract has

been completed some time ago," Igor said in response and understanding. "As I said, you have indeed fulfilled our contract, but the Velvet Room is always available to all of its guests. Hence, my services in Persona fusions are available as well, should you ever find the need. I have summoned you to inform you, as a reminder."

Re-admittance into the Velvet Room once more? Minato thought it was a rather nifty bonus for his undead life, if he required or needed to fuse Personas. While he had many powerful and versatile Personas he could currently summon that the idea of him needing a new one seemed pointless, the fact that he can utilize the Velvet Room and Igor's services was something he noted to himself.

When exactly the need for a new Persona would arise, though, was something that he could not foresee. If he ever desired one, he knew for certain that the Velvet Room was open to him.

"Why am I here now?" Minato asked his next question. After all the time that passed since he was resurrected by Eu, what made Igor decide to bring him back now?

"Your situation is... unique," Igor stated collectedly. "You are, in a sense, alive, and yet you are not at the same time. Because of your circumstances, it did not seem appropriate for me to summon you here until you were more adjusted to your new way of life. It would have been most rude of me to intrude on your time of mitigation. I believed you deserved a well-earned rest from your previous journey."

'...I see. That's why,' Minato mused. It was a pleasant surprise to hear the master of the Velvet Room voluntarily express empathy, not that the zombie doubted him by any means. Igor appeared to be cryptic with his choice of words a majority of the time, but it could be possibly out of a sense of professionalism.

It just goes to show that even Igor had a heart.

"Now then," Igor continued. "Time marches on in your world. I shouldn't keep you here any longer. My only purpose for summoning you was to inform you that the Velvet Room will always be accessible to you. The Velvet Key I provided you from your last

journey is still in your possession, meaning you can access the Velvet Room whenever you feel the need to return here. If you have any more questions you would like me to answer, you are more than welcome to do so."

As it just so happened, there was one question Minato wanted to ask.

"Where's Elizabeth?"

While he was still grinning, Igor let out a small chuckle as he closed his eyes.

"By her own will, she chose to depart from the Velvet Room and set out on her own journey in hopes of freeing you from your former predicament quite some time ago. I, regrettably, do not have the means of contacting her so that you may reconvene with her once more..."

A brief period of silence passed before Igor continued and re-opened his eyes.

"However, though I may not have the ability to foresee the future accurately, I have no doubt that you will see her in due time."

Hearing what he wanted to hear, Minato responded with a polite nod. It would be nice to see Elizabeth again.

Much to his expectations, his sight began to darken as Igor bid him adieu.

"Til we meet again... farewell."

Morning

Letting out a yawn, Minato stretched his body as he rose up from his bed. Despite his visit to the Velvet Room, he felt refreshed. It was a good thing that trips to there from his dreams did not fatigue his

mind. After taking a moment to rub his eyes so that his vision would not blur everything in front of him, it did not take long for him to notice the cloudy skies outside from seeing through the window in his bedroom. Today would be a good day for Ayumu to go outside. The past few days had yielded constant sunlight, so it wasn't hard for Minato to imagine that his fellow zombie was sick of the sun and wished to go somewhere.

The cloudy skies weren't the only things Minato had noticed.

Veering his head slightly to the side, he realized that he was not alone in his room.

"Good morning, Minato-sama. Did you sleep well?"

It was at this point in time when he experienced intense déjà vu, recalling a memory of Aegis being by his bedside the morning after SEES returned from their vacation in Yakushima last year.

This time, though, instead of Aegis was Seraphim, the vampire ninja Minato had met last night. She was also the very same vampire ninja that became his servant. She was at the edge of Minato's bed while on her knees, attired in a dark red and sleeveless blouse with thin shoulder straps while also wearing black shorts. She appeared to be observing the blue-haired boy. How much time did she spend in his room?

If it wasn't for the simple fact that Minato was used to a girl watching him sleep, he would have been bewildered upon acknowledging Seraphim's presence, the keywords being "would have been".

"Morning, Seraphim," Minato greeted the vampire ninja with a faint smile, mostly ignoring the possibility that she could have been staring at him as he slept for a long period of time. "I actually did sleep well. Thanks for asking."

Sera smiled at him. "I'm glad to hear that. To be honest, I didn't expect you to awaken this early. Lady Hellscythe informed me that you occasionally tend to sleep in."

"Is that so? ...Huh, I guess you're right," Minato said, rubbing the

back of his head. On the nightstand by his bed, he saw the current time on his mp3 player. It was six-ten. He found himself a bit surprised that he woke up this early as Sera had said. He blamed his previous morning routine of preparing for school in conditioning him. Usually, he would wake up at nine or ten in the morning if Eu chose to not get him up herself. The most popular reason for the necromancer to rouse her servant from his lengthy rest was when she wanted him to make breakfast, which Minato could not find her at fault for doing such a thing. She really loved his cooking.

Since he just so happened to wake up early, Minato thought it would be ideal for him to start making breakfast for his master, himself, and everyone else in the house. It would take more time to whip up breakfast because he now had another mouth to feed, which was Seraphim's.

The vampire ninja, after declaring herself as Minato's servant last night, adamantly chose to live with him so that she would be in close proximity of Minato and could carry out his orders if he had any. After hearing her intentions and being reconnected to become whole again, Ayumu was initially quite stupefied about her moving in. He was very reluctant to accept another "freeloader" into his home, as he already had to deal with Haruna. Eu and Minato were exceptions because of obvious reasons. Ayumu also just did not seem to like Seraphim at all, which wasn't completely unreasonable in Minato's eyes.

As expected when Ayumu stated his opinions, Seraphim insulted him and then threatened to cut him down like she previously did in her fight against him and her master for suggesting her to not be with her master, to which Minato couldn't help but let out an exasperated sigh. He could not understand why the black-haired girl gave Ayumu so much contempt. And he had a feeling he wouldn't receive a proper answer from her even if he had asked.

For the sake of Ayumu's well-being, Minato allowed Seraphim to come live with him and everyone else in Ayumu's home. She then happily praised him for being a rational person, resulting in his Social Link with her to rank up, unlike Ayumu, to whom she made yet another rude remark, much to the gray-haired teen's justifiable disbelief.

At first, Ayumu was extremely confused as to why his senpai decided to have the vampire ninja live with them. Before Minato could explain his reason to him, the gray-haired boy immediately assumed that Minato did what he did because he actually liked the idea of having his own servant. It was because of this assumption that Ayumu somewhat begrudgingly accepted his senpai's "reason", saying that it was legit for a guy to want to have a female servant of his own.

Minato decided to say nothing to his kouhai's presumption and chose to go along with it.

"By the way," Minato started speaking while also turning his head towards Sera, "is there a reason for you being in my room, Seraphim?"

Sera tilted her head, as if Minato should already know the answer to his question.

"Well, I am your servant, Minato-sama. It's only natural that I should check up on you in case there is something I can assist you with," she reasoned calmly, earning a small smile, albeit a forced one, from her blue-haired master.

"I see. I appreciate the thought, Seraphim. Thanks."

"It is my pleasure," Sera replied with a smile of her own as she stood up and bowed slightly. "While we are on the subject, do you have something you wish for me to do?"

As fate would have it, there was something Minato had in mind for her after he pondered her question for a moment.

"If isn't too much to ask, could you bring out a carton of eggs, some chives, and butter from the fridge in the kitchen and set them on the table for me?" He asked. "I'll be making breakfast for everyone once I'm done freshening myself."

Receiving a nod from Sera, she said, "Understood, Minato-sama."

Nodding as well, Minato let out another yawn as he proceeded to leave his comfy bed and make it. He stood next to Sera as he did

this. "Let's get started, then."

He had assumed Sera would begin to do what he had kindly asked of her once he got off his bed. Not immediately, so to speak, but he thought she would have left in a relatively short span of a few seconds.

He did not anticipate her asking him a specific question that would actually surprise him.

"Would you like me to give you a bath, Minato-sama?"

Her question had consequently caused the blue-haired boy to pause in what he was doing, as it took a moment for him to register her words in his mind. And when he did process her inquiry...

It took all of the willpower that he had to fight back a rather scandalous image from emerging in his mind.

"That... won't be necessary, Seraphim," Minato responded as calmly as he could while shaking his head slowly, choosing to not make eye contact with the vampire ninja.

Honestly, Minato didn't have much to say about Seraphim. He didn't think ill of her, despite her apparent disgust of Ayumu. She was rather cordial to Minato and Eu. Taking into account her interactions with Ayumu, he wondered if she was bipolar or simply disliked the gray-haired zombie for a reason that she had yet to state. He could obviously tell that she was quite loyal. From their recent battle, he knew she was very adept in combat. She proved herself to be a worthy and capable adversary. This was practically obvious since she took the fight to a somewhat lethal level, compared to what he and Ayumu originally had in mind. Minato disregarded that fact since he and Ayumu were zombies, meaning they were incapable of dying.

He also thought she was quite attractive, though he probably wouldn't admit it unless someone asked for his opinion about her looks.

Just because he found her to be physically alluring, however, it did

not mean he wanted to establish a romantic relationship with her. He had a Social Link with her, yes, but that alone wasn't enough for him to pursue an amorous connection with the vampire ninja.

Because of his Social Link with Sera, meaning their destinies were intertwined, he opted to have a healthy friendship with her.

Minato believed the first step in this process was to have her stop calling him "Minato-sama".

He wasn't too fond about having Sera as a servant, not that he disliked her. The idea of having a female servant simply just did not appeal to him. Maybe the prospect would excite someone like Junpei, and maybe even Ayumu, but not Minato. He desired to treat the vampire ninja as an equal, and vice versa.

Even though he had been Eu's servant for a month, he never considered his relationship with her as a master-servant one per se. He cared about her as a good friend. Her "orders" mainly consisted of preparing food or food-shopping. He merely looked after her, akin to how an older brother would take care of a younger sister. Did Ayumu also think similarly?

For the time being, it would be much easier for Minato to treat Seraphim as a friend.

Now, the question was how difficult will it be for her to conform.

"Very well then," Sera said in response to the blue-haired zombie's question with a nod. "If that is all, then I shall carry out your requests."

Before she had the chance to exit the Persona-user's room through whatever method she preferred, Minato spoke up as he turned to face her.

"Hold on a moment, Seraphim," he said.

"Hmm? What is it, Minato-sama?" She asked.

Minato looked at her dead in the eye and stated, "Do not call me 'Minato-sama' anymore."

"...Should I consider that as an order, then?" was Sera's only reply as she tilted her head, sounding confused.

Letting out a small sigh, Minato spoke with a gentle tone in his voice, "If it was, I have a feeling you would follow it without any questions. ...But that would defeat the purpose. Listen, Seraphim, I don't wish for you to be my servant. I don't want to even be a master. You don't have to force yourself to become my servant just because you lost in our duel yesterday. We never agreed on something like that anyway."

His words appeared to have struck a chord with Sera, given the stunned expression on her face. Even so, he continued to talk with her.

"You said it yourself. You want to become Eu's servant. And I don't mind that. As long as you don't intend to put Eu in harm's way, then you can stay in this house and try to serve under her. I don't think I should be telling you how to live your life, but... You should follow your heart. This isn't an order, Seraphim. It's advice... from someone who wants to be your friend."

Minato couldn't help but feel surprised that he spoke with such emotion. He merely told Sera what was on his mind, and he had meant every word of it. He supposed it was because he wasn't used to pouring his heart out to someone before. The only other time he could remember when he did was when he first met Eu. It was... strange. He was so accustomed to others talking to him about their feelings; not the other way around. Did meeting Eu actually change him a little as a person?

The blue-haired boy's attention was soon redirected to the black-haired girl in front of him as she gave him a smile.

"Your altruism is... astonishing. Just as I'd expect from he who sacrificed himself for the world," Sera said affectionately. Minato let that remark pass, despite her giving him too much credit. "Very well then. I shall take your advice to heart and attempt to get into Lady Hellscythe's good graces, for it is what I want to do. ...And I also would not mind in becoming your friend, Minato-sa —"

She stopped herself from addressing Minato with excessive formality as she suddenly remembered his words.

"Pardon me, but how do you prefer to be addressed from now on?" She asked the Persona-user.

Minato smiled at her as he extended his hand towards her.

"Minato will suffice, Seraphim."

Detecting his intention of a handshake to formally start their friendship, Sera gave him a thoughtful look and shook his hand with her own.

"I'm content with you addressing me as Sera, then. I hope for us to be compatible as friends, Minato."

"Likewise, Sera," Minato replied.

"Thou shalt have our blessing twice more when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Fortune Arcana..."

'...Huh.'

This was... interesting.

His Social Link with Sera had risen twice in one go.

He honestly didn't expect that. He must have had a greater impact on her than he originally assumed.

Well, at least it looked like his friendship with Sera was off to a good start.

Ayumu couldn't stop himself from letting out a huge yawn as he stretched his body. He had just woken up. Sitting up straight on his bed, he glanced through his window's drapery to check the weather outside. Much to his pleasure, it seemed to be cloudy today.

"What a perfect day," Ayumu said to himself, grinning. Finally, one

morning that had no sunlight for him to deal with! "I'm surprised that I don't feel too tired right now, after all of that drama yesterday."

Ayumu began to reflect upon the events that took place last night when he returned home from school, now that he was alone and could think more clearly.

'Man... I always knew that Minato-senpai was a great guy, but damn...'

The gray-haired zombie then snorted.

'Who would have thought that he saved humanity?'

Last night, after Ayumu, Minato, Haruna, and Seraphim came back to the Aikawa household, Minato chose to tell everyone his past. The blue-haired boy wanted to have Eu with them first before he would say anything. The reason why he decided to reveal his past was due to the fact Seraphim had referred to him as a Messiah, and Ayumu and Haruna were really clueless as to why she called him one. He thought it was about time for him to step out of the shadows. He didn't have anything to hide, in reality.

Minato's story was, for lack of a better word, incredible.

He began from when his parents had perished in an accident over ten years ago that brought about him in becoming an orphan at a young age, which elicited looks of sympathy from his housemates. He then jumped ahead to the events that occurred in 2009, informing his housemates of the Dark Hour, the Shadows, Tartarus, and the everlasting friends he had made from joining the Specialized Extracurricular Execution Squad, who were Persona-users like him. Minato had left no detail behind as he described his and his friends' desire to eradicate Shadows and the Dark Hour for a more prosperous future and the bonds they shared.

Ayumu and Haruna were absolutely fascinated by Minato's story from the start, as they listened to it with increasing interest as the blue-haired zombie detailed everything that occurred chronologically. Haruna did excitedly ask some questions here and there, and Minato didn't mind answering as it helped everyone's

understanding. Eu and Seraphim were silent as they both let the information given to them sink in.

Minato also told his housemates of the Fall, the cataclysmic event that would have wiped off every human being on Earth, and Nyx. It was then when Eu decided to politely intervene and shared her knowledge to her housemates. In the Underworld, its denizens were largely aware of the prophecy that would bring about humanity's demise. She related that information when Minato mentioned the origin of the Dark Hour. She stated that it was fated — or more like, people of the Underworld believed — for all humans to die from the Fall and subsequently come to the Underworld. She also said that it was for that reason that she was aware of Persona-users like Minato and some of the events of the past year. When she was finished relating what she knew, it didn't surprise her when everyone looked at her with bewilderment, including Minato as well. To ease some of the tension, she made a light joke that the Underworld would have had its hands full with an entire human population to deal with.

After the shock wore off, Minato carried on with his story. Specifically, he talked about his and his friends' last stand against Nyx.

For a moment, Ayumu almost thought that Minato's tale of fighting against supernatural creatures and a goddess entailed a triumphant, joyful ending. It would have been almost like something he had seen in anime or movies, where the protagonists were victorious after many hardships.

That was until the blue-haired teenager revealed the truth of the battle's bittersweet aftermath.

Arisato Minato gave his life to save mankind. The Persona-user told his housemates how he died, the moment that he did die in one of his closest friend's arms, and what happened afterwards, particularly talking about himself becoming humanity's aegis from nigh extinction. He concluded his story on a positive note, which involved how he initially met Eu and his resurrection by her hands.

At the close, everyone noticed Haruna sniffing a little, to which she hastily denied in order to hide her embarrassment. It was then when

Minato went to give the brunette a reassuring pat on her shoulder, prompting her to release all of her tears, hugging him, and saying to him that he didn't deserve to die. Seraphim and Eu were noticeably affected as well, if their sorrowful expressions were any indication.

When Haruna had calmed down, Seraphim confessed her reason as to how she knew about Minato, believing that it was only fair for him to know the truth. Apparently, she hadn't been fully aware of Minato's circumstances. She only knew of his existence through her vampire ninja superiors. Her superiors — how exactly they came to acquire information about Minato, she admitted that even she did not know — had held the bluenette in high regard as a Messiah, hence why she referred to Minato as one. She stated that she was legitimately interested in a person who managed to galvanize her superiors, but she unfortunately couldn't get any proper answers from them. She added that now she could see why because the real deal was in her presence.

Ayumu had to admit, he honestly had no idea that Minato's death contained such a tragic backstory. He truly felt sad for the bluenette that he had already admired a lot. Knowing that Minato indirectly prevented him from dying prematurely made Ayumu respect his senpai even more, despite Ayumu actually dying later on.

Words couldn't describe how grateful and lucky Ayumu was for having Minato as a friend.

"Ugh... I should probably get ready for school already," Ayumu said as he finished his musing, getting out of his bed. "I also have to check on Senpai. It's his turn to make breakfast, after all."

It was with another yawn escaping from his mouth that Ayumu proceeded to leave his room, as he went to see if Minato was awake or not. Before he reached the bluenette's room, he noticed two individuals walking out of said room with a pleasant air around them.

"Oh. Morning, Ayumu," Minato calmly greeted the gray-haired zombie.

"Hey, Senpai. Morning to you too. I didn't expect to see you up this early," Ayumu responded with a smile. His eyes then wandered over

to the person next to Minato, and his smile vanished almost entirely. "Seraphim."

"Maggot," the vampire ninja greeted bluntly before she walked past Ayumu, causing him to roll his eyes.

When Seraphim was out of his sight, Ayumu said to Minato while elbowing him, "She's a real charmer, huh?"

"She is," Minato simply stated, smiling.

With those words voiced, Ayumu idly wondered if his senpai was smiling from his sarcastic comment or if he really thought that about the vampire ninja. The gray-haired teenager could never read the older male.

It didn't take too long for a thought to come to Ayumu's mind, and his eyes widened. What triggered this thought was the fact that Seraphim came out of Minato's room along with the blue-haired zombie who owned the aforementioned room. And Seraphim looked as if she was practically glowing when she left.

"Wait... Did you two...?" Looking like a slack-jawed moron, Ayumu couldn't help but stare at Minato with shock.

No. Way.

Seraphim and Minato haven't even known each other for a whole day yet!

"...What?" Minato asked innocently, tilting his head before letting out a tiny yawn.

The color from Ayumu's face had then virtually and suddenly drained all at once.

"Y-You... are the man, Senpai..." Ayumu whispered in awe, prior to shakily saying, "Now... if you will excuse me... I'm going to go brush my teeth..."

With a blank expression on his face, the gray-haired zombie left for the bathroom, leaving behind a perplexed Minato.

"...I have no idea what just happened," the bluenette muttered to himself.

Some Time Later

Eucliwood couldn't stop herself from wandering into the kitchen as she was drawn in by scents that made her stomach growl.

The thought of tasting Minato's cooking was enough to make her tear her eyes away from this one detective TV show she had been engrossed in lately and check on her servant's progress.

When she entered the kitchen, she noticed the blue-haired boy in front of the stove and five plates of omelettes on the kitchen counter, looking very tasty.

She already thought this, but she was glad that Minato was a prodigious chef.

"Alright, the omelettes are finished. The miso soup should be done soon. Is there anything else? Hmm... I think we're good on rice," Minato wondered out loud as he stood in the kitchen, listening to a new song from this one music artist he discovered a while ago with his headphones and mp3 player. He recently finished making the omelettes he wanted to cook, and now he was waiting for his miso soup to be at an optimal and warm temperature. Seraphim didn't request him to make her miso soup, but he felt like whipping up some.

Seeing as how Minato had his headphones on, Eu promptly walked up to him and tugged the back of his shirt to get his attention. Minato then turned around, and after removing his headphones from his ears, he let them lay on his chest.

[Can I eat yet?] Eu asked curiously, earning a small smile from the bluenette.

"Almost, Eu," Minato replied. "I just have to wait for the miso soup to

get warmer."

The silver-haired necromancer tilted her head. She recalled Minato saying that he was preparing omelettes for breakfast today. He didn't mention anything about miso soup, not that she really minded. [Did Seraphim ask you to make her miso soup?]

"No, but I felt like making it since it's something I don't cook too often. Maybe Sera coming did influence me in having an interest in miso soup." Minato shrugged.

Eu quietly took note of her blue-haired servant addressing the vampire ninja with a shortened version of her name. She didn't expect them to become closer to the point where Minato would call her by a nickname that quickly. Then again, Seraphim did say that she was Minato's servant, so it wasn't hard to see the black-haired girl stating that she wouldn't mind being referred to with such familiarity. Eu thought that was a logical conclusion.

[You're too nice, Minato.] She said, causing Minato to wonder what she meant. She flipped over to the next page on her notepad and wrote, [According to Seraphim, you defeated her yesterday, yet you suffered injuries, though none were as severe as the one Ayumu had. You should have been fully capable of negating anything she attacked you with, right?]

A thin smile formed on Minato's face. She was concerned for him. "You know me well, Eu. You're right. From my analysis of Sera's fighting style, she prioritizes herself in using her Swallow Return Strike, which are Slash-based attacks. I do have plenty of Personas that can negate Slash attacks, but I decided not to use any of them."

[And why is that?] Eu couldn't help but ask.

"It wouldn't have been fair for someone as strong as Sera," the blue-haired zombie admitted truthfully. "Fair challenges are a virtue to me. I guess it's something that I learned from doing kendo at Gekkoukan last year. I also wanted to see how I would fare against a tenacious sword-user like her."

[So you gave her a handicap.] Eu stated flatly, eliciting a pat on her

head from Minato.

"Pretty much," he responded. "It was sort of careless of me, I'll admit. Sorry if I worried you, Eu. I'd never actually do that to you, you know."

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Death Arcana..."

[It's all right. You're a good servant, Minato.] was what Eu wrote before she left the kitchen to go watch her TV show.

"I aim to please, Eu," she heard Minato say in somewhat of a whimsical tone.

She smiled absently at his humor. He knew her well.

Meanwhile, in the air ducts above the kitchen, a certain vampire ninja had been listening to the recent conversation that took place beneath her.

'It seems that you keep finding new ways to impress me, Minato...' Sera thought to herself as she smiled. The blue-haired Messiah wanted to be on even grounds with her in their duel. He might have known that doing so could have caused him to actually lose, yet he still chose to do it.

To her, it would be no lie if she said that he had won more respect from her.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Fortune Arcana..."

Minato found himself blinking a couple of times in surprise as he carefully looked around him.

What the hell?

Why did his Social Link with Seraphim suddenly increase when she wasn't even near him?

Breakfast was serene, as far as Minato was concerned. His housemates told him that his omelettes were delicious after letting themselves taste the dishes, along with his miso soup. Ayumu offhandedly suggested that Minato should pursue a career in culinary arts because of his gift, to which the bluenette responded with a carefree "maybe". Haruna was eating her food with much gusto, as usual. The only thing that was new was Seraphim eating with everyone, but she was now a resident of the household. Nothing was really out of the ordinary, to be honest. Then again, nothing about Minato and his life was normal anymore, which he didn't mind.

He couldn't help but notice that everyone seemed closer to him, though he knew why. He did divulge his past last night, after all. His Social Links with Haruna and Ayumu, along with the Fool Social Link, went up once after he finished telling his story. He recently established a friendship with Seraphim, and his bond with Eucliwood ranked up a short while ago.

It was a pleasant feeling to experience in which he belonged somewhere again.

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Fool Arcana..."

Though he did find it a little odd that his relationship with Sera was growing at a remarkable pace, compared to his previous and current Social Links.

"Ayumu! Seconds! Now! Come on, hurry up!" Haruna eagerly held out her empty bowl of rice to Ayumu, who was sitting by the rice cooker.

"Alright, I heard you the first time," Ayumu said calmly as he filled the brunette's bowl with warm rice.

"May I have some more miso soup, Minato?" Seraphim politely asked the blue-haired boy sitting next to her, holding out her empty bowl towards him.

"Of course," Minato said as he poured some miso soup into her bowl. "Here you go."

"Thank you," Sera replied kindly. She then noticed that she was low on rice. Swallowing some of her pride, she begrudgingly asked the gray-haired zombie sitting across from her, "More rice, maggot."

Sarcasm saturating his voice, Ayumu said, "Oh, sure thing." A second later, his face scrunched up in annoyance. "Hey! You know, you could be a little bit nicer to someone who took you into their home!"

Sera calmly responded as she briefly glanced at Minato, "It's my understanding that it was Minato who allowed me to stay here; not you. Besides, in my life, niceties are rare things."

"How come?" Minato wondered curiously while Ayumu was replenishing Sera's rice bowl.

"War has been waged in the vampire ninja village for one hundred years now," she answered. "That sort of thing has affected me quite a bit, so forgive me if I sometimes come off as rude, Minato."

"No worries," Minato replied, earning a nod from the black-haired girl.

"Sorry you've had it so tough," Ayumu added sincerely as he returned Sera's bowl.

"Do not infer to sympathize with me, you maggot!" Sera coldly responded.

Ayumu sighed in exasperation. Why was his senpai getting better treatment from Seraphim? Actually, he could think of a handful of reasons why, but it still wasn't fair for him! "I have a name, by the way! It's Ayumu!"

"I am aware, but I shall call you *maggot*," the vampire ninja

proclaimed. One could veritably hear the intense inhospitality in her voice.

"Why do you keep calling me that?!" Ayumu asked in disbelief.

Haruna decided to join in and said, "Maybe because it rhymes with ___"

"Shut up!" Ayumu immediately interrupted her.

Minato and Eu had remained silent throughout the whole exchange, deciding it was best to let it sort itself out and continue to eat their food.

"Oh," Haruna spoke up as she hit the palm of her hand with her fist. "Could you wait a bit before you go to school, Ayumu? I've got another box for you today."

Knowing that she was referring to his lunch, Ayumu said in a snarky tone, "Wait, don't tell me. It's all fried eggs again, huh?"

Giving him a flat look, Haruna responded, "Thanks for ruining the joke, you jerk."

"Do you think perhaps you can just make my lunch without thinking of it as a big joke?" Ayumu carried on with his sarcasm before deciding to drop it and admit, "Never mind. The stuff you packed yesterday was so good, you can do whatever you want."

A light blush on her face, Haruna boastfully stated while folding her arms, "Well, of course you liked it! But, I don't really need your permission to be a genius!"

In response to her statement, Ayumu couldn't help but laugh a little. Haruna was fun to mess with.

"Stop laughing! It's repugnant!" The brunette insisted while pointing at him, also causing him to flinch.

"It certainly is," Sera added, which didn't help Ayumu's self-esteem whatsoever.

"Geez..." Ayumu muttered. It took him a second to realize that Minato looked amused. "Hmm? What's on your mind, Minato-senpai?"

"Oh, nothing," came a dismissive response from the Persona-user. "I just noticed that it's raining outside, so you should probably take an umbrella with you today."

"Really?" Ayumu wondered, giving a quick glance at the door in the living room that led to outside. "Oh, you're right. Thanks for the heads-up!"

Minato nodded before he found himself lost in his thoughts.

'This is going to be a long, interesting afterlife,' he mused.

Iwatodai

"How... How is it possible?" Shirogane Naoto asked herself, eyes widened. She had just finished reviewing city security footage from one month ago that was given to her, as per Kirijo Mitsuru's request. The head of the Kirijo Group was confident that she and her associates had left no stone unturned when collecting and reassessing data on this particular case Naoto had taken on without hesitation. However, Mitsuru believed it wouldn't hurt to have the young detective look over the data.

As it turned out, there was something that they missed.

On the date of April 13th, 2010, there was footage of two individuals at Iwatodai Station entering a train bound for Tokyo in the dead of night. One of the individuals, who appeared to be around Naoto's height, was a female with long, silver hair, and she was apparently wearing armor.

The other was a blue-haired male who Naoto was all too familiar with.

'I thought you were dead...' She repeated that same thought in her head over and over again. But the truth was clear as day as she fought back the tears that began to form on the edges of her eyes.

Arisato Minato walked among the living.

As she attempted to calm herself down, she remembered the words that were spoken to her by Minato himself prior to leaving to pursue an education at Gekkoukan High School last year.

"It's a detective's job to find truth hidden within depths of darkness, Naoto-chan. I don't doubt that you'll become an amazing detective someday. You just have to believe in yourself."

She gazed at the piece of evidence once more, steeling herself.

Naoto didn't know what the future held for her, but one thing was absolutely certain...

'I will find you, Nii-san...'

Tokyo

"...Achoo!"

[Bless you, Minato.] Eu took the time to write that as she refrained from eating for a moment.

"Thanks, Eu," Minato responded kindly. *'Weird... I don't feel sick...'*

The Next Day

Morning

[Thank you for the tea, Minato.] Eu told her blue-haired servant as

she started to drink the aforementioned tea.

"Don't mention it," Minato answered with a faint smile. As he and the necromancer sat in the living room, he asked the girl next to him, "Do you want some tea, Sera?"

"I am not thirsty, but I appreciate the offer, Minato," Seraphim replied.

The three then unexpectedly heard a feminine scream from upstairs.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhh!"

"It looks like Haruna is up," Minato noted serenely. Sera nodded.

"Indeed." The vampire ninja turned to Eu. "I hope your morning is going better than hers, my lady."

Minato sighed. "I told Haruna that having *that* alarm clock was a bad idea..."

"Is there a reason that made you think having an alarm clock that would peck you to wake you up would be a good idea?" Minato asked Haruna, who currently had a bandage on her forehead. He made some brief glances at the now nonfunctional and oddly designed alarm clock that was on the coffee table, courtesy of Haruna.

"It just looked cool, Blue!" Haruna pouted, crossing her arms. "That's all. I didn't think it'd peck through my skull..."

"You should have been already aware of that fact, though," Seraphim reasoned. "After all, you tested it on the maggot last night."

Haruna shrugged. "Yeah, but that was just Ayumu."

As if on cue, Ayumu then walked into the living room from the kitchen while carrying plates of eggs and said, "Came out kind of hard this morning."

Minato sensed an innuendo in there, one that Junpei would probably laugh his ass off at, but decided to not bring it up.

"Pervert," Sera bluntly complained as she poured tea into Eu's teacup. She detected the innuendo too, apparently. "Make me imagine that part of you again, and I'll slice it off."

Resisting a sigh, Ayumu stated, "I'm talking about the eggs being a little overdone."

"Then perhaps you should say what you mean. You'll live longer," the vampire ninja responded.

Ayumu blinked. "Uh... That last part doesn't make much sense when you're talking to me or Minato-senpai."

In response, Sera merely glanced at the destroyed alarm clock on the coffee table. "There are a myriad of things here that don't make sense."

Seeing what she was talking about, Ayumu said, "Yeah, my parents are always sending back weird crap they find while they're out traveling the world. Probably a guilty conscience thing because they left their precious son behind."

"I see. The reason you've learned how to be so resourceful on your own is because not even your own parents can tolerate you," Sera carried on with her insults, to which Minato could care less. She and Ayumu went back and forth with snarky comments so much that he was used to it at this point. Their interactions almost reminded him of the ones Yukari and Junpei typically had. He idly wondered if they still had that dynamic today. Possibly.

"So you're a master of the sword and the back-handed compliment. This just keeps getting better," Ayumu replied sarcastically. It was after he said his piece when he noticed Eu and Haruna were gone from the living room. "Say, where's Eu and Haruna?"

"I think they went to the kitchen," Minato answered. A few moments later, sure enough, he was right as both girls exited the kitchen. For some reason, Haruna looked upset while Eu appeared to be

impassive as ever.

"Hey, we've only got one cup of pudding left!" Haruna announced.

'Dammit.' Ayumu mentally facepalmed himself. *'I forgot to buy more last time I went out.'*

[Can we get some more?] Eu asked nobody in particular. She was really craving for some pudding right now.

"I've got to go to school soon, so I can't do it," Ayumu reasoned. He then looked towards the only other male in the room besides himself. "Sorry, Senpai, but can you go out and get them pudding?"

"Sure," was Minato's response.

"Will you be all right?" Seraphim worriedly asked the Persona-user. She knew zombies such as Minato and the maggot were vulnerable to sunlight. And today was definitely sunny. She received a reassuring thumbs-up from him.

"With Surt, I'll be fine," he said confidently.

Sera tilted her head in confusion, along with Haruna and Ayumu.

[A Persona Minato has.] Eu explained to her housemates. Minato nodded.

"Yup. With it, I don't have to worry about sunlight," he informed.

"Well, that is certainly beneficial," Sera stated, eliciting another nod from the blue-haired boy.

"...Can we start eating breakfast, now?" Minato then asked calmly, as Ayumu had yet to give everyone their breakfasts.

Ayumu blinked.

"Oh! Sorry," the gray-haired zombie said while finally handing everyone their meals. "Itadakimasu!"

Some Time Later

Seraphim found herself contemplating her next move.

The maggot had left for school, and Minato was out shopping for pudding cups. So right now, she, Haruna, and Eucliwood were the only ones at home.

To pass the time, Haruna thought that they should play a game to escape from boredom. The brunette dug around in the room that Ayumu stored all of the stuff his parents had given to him from their travels to find something they could play.

The girls were currently playing a game known as Jenga. It was apparently a game that tested one's physical and mental capabilities.

"Swallow Return Strike," Sera calmly said as she moved a block from the tower that consisted of fifty-four blocks.

"Is there some kind of reason you're playing, too?" Haruna couldn't help but ask the vampire ninja.

"I do what I must to serve Lady Hellscythe," Sera answered while Eu took her turn to move a block.

Haruna grinned before her turn to move a block had come. "Fine by me! Beating both of you will be twice as sweet!"

"Of course," Sera continued, "half of my victory will belong to Lady Hellscythe."

[Not all of it, then?] Eu wondered.

The game carried on for a few more minutes before anyone spoke up again.

"You know, if you really want some pudding for yourself, they sell some at the store," Haruna told Sera.

"Minato has already left to purchase the snack, so I see no point in fetching some for myself," the black-haired girl replied calmly.

"Hmm... True." Haruna shrugged before sighing. "I wish Ayumu actually bought enough for all of us, though."

"Speaking of that maggot, the skies are clear and sunny," Sera noted. "Are you certain he survived the walk to school?"

Haruna thought about that for a moment. "I think so. He brought an umbrella with him today, so he should be fine."

"What an idiot," the vampire ninja criticized the poor gray-haired zombie. "Doesn't he comprehend how foolish it is for a zombie to walk around in broad daylight? Unlike Minato, he could die."

While it was Haruna's turn to move a block, the brunette said, "Eh... Ayumu's weird. I don't think he can die. The first time I met him, I literally cut him in half and he's still around today. Freaky, huh?"

"Oh, so he's more like a sponge than an actual human. But still a maggot," the vampire ninja articulated.

Meanwhile, Aikawa Ayumu was not exactly having the time of his life at school.

He absolutely hated his seat in his classroom. Why the hell did he have to sit next to the window? Even with his umbrella, it didn't help him at all as he hyperventilated slightly from being overwhelmed by sunlight.

One of his classmates, Hiramatsu Taeko, who had brown hair and pigtails, was currently talking with him. She was worried about him.

"Are you okay?" Taeko asked concernedly. "You look as if you're going to pass out."

"Nah... I'm all right," Ayumu reassured, but he was lying to himself. He just said what he said to make Taeko feel better. "It's... just the heat! I think I probably should've been born as an Eskimo..."

His attention and Taeko's were soon redirected to a certain spiky-haired student.

"Lookie here!" Orito said to a female student, trying to score with her. "I've got something in my pocket that might interest you!" He then pulled out two tickets to bowling from his shirt's pocket.

Unfortunately for him, he was quickly shot down.

Ayumu and Taeko then witnessed Orito being rejected by a few other girls as he tried to use some cheesy pick-up lines. It was a really pitiful display.

"Well... I need to go, Ayumu," Taeko said awkwardly. "I have to use the restroom."

"Alright. See ya," Ayumu replied as the only girl who actually talked to him in school left the classroom.

A moment later, Ayumu found himself talking to Orito, who seemed to have perked up despite his failure of getting a date.

"Bowling, huh?"

"Yep! You and me can be pin pals, get it?" Orito said with enthusiasm.

The gray-haired teenager could only stare blankly at his friend. That was such a lame pun. He wasn't a fan of puns, either.

'Couldn't get a date, so I get invited to the pity party...' Ayumu mused.

"It'll be fun! Besides, I'm getting tired of hanging around girls all the time," Orito insisted, not noticing the girls who had rejected him recently behind him. Ayumu, however, noticed them and was not liking where his friend was going with this conversation. "I mean, chicks are cool for some things. You know what I'm talking about? But I'm in the mood for a bro job."

'Oh, crap! It's not what it sounds like, girls!' Ayumu inwardly panicked. *'For the love of God, please don't listen to him!'*

"We can't let these tickets just go to waste!" Orito continued, still clueless. He was then taken aback when Ayumu suddenly got up and placed his hands on his shoulders, tears streaming from his eyes.

"Fine, fine! I'll go, as long as you don't say another word about it!" Ayumu declared. It looked like he was going to go bowling later.

Afternoon

In the end, the three girls in the Aikawa household decided that there was no real winner to their game of Jenga after playing for a long time, so they continued to play a myriad of other games to cure their boredom.

The games included were: mahjongg, Gekiatsu, Dance Dance Revolution, Tekken 6, Mario Kart Wii, and Super Smash Bros. Brawl.

Somehow, neither of them were winners of those games.

At this point in time, they were playing Twister. Though, Haruna and Seraphim were the only ones actually playing the game. Eu was spinning the wheel for them.

"Right foot, blue," Haruna muttered as she placed her right foot on a blue circle.

"I've been meaning to ask you something," Sera started to talk with the brunette. She wanted to ask her about a topic that had been on her mind for a while. "How is it that you came to find yourself living with Minato and the maggot?"

"The only reason I'm staying here is because Ayumu stole my magic powers!" Haruna pouted. Actually, she had another reason for sticking around, but she deemed it wasn't necessary for her housemates to know.

"That doesn't make sense," Sera argued. "Surely someone as lowly as him wouldn't be capable of such a feat."

"Nothing about that guy makes sense to me," Haruna replied simply. Sera nodded.

"I suppose that is fair. So, what of Minato?"

Haruna extended her left hand to place it on a red circle. "I met Minato the same time as Ayumu. Blue helped me out in killing a Megalo by using one of his... What did he call them? Personics?"

Seraphim narrowed her eyes. "Personas," she corrected the brunette.

"Yeah, that," Haruna affirmed.

The black-haired vampire ninja then glanced over to the necromancer in the room. "Lady Hellsythe, would you like to play?"

[I'm content with watching.] Eu answered.

"Hey, I'm home," all three girls heard a familiar voice from behind the living room door. A few seconds later, Minato walked in as he removed his headphones from his ears.

[Welcome back, Minato.] Eu greeted the blue-haired zombie. Minato nodded at her.

"You arrived at an optimal time," Sera said to him, getting up from the floor with Haruna. "I was just thinking now would be a good time for lunch."

"What do you girls want to eat?" Minato asked his female housemates. With the money he had that he previously gave to Eu, he still had quite a large amount of cash on him. "It'll be my treat."

Sera smiled at him. "I'm glad to see that you are a chivalrous being, Minato." He tilted his head in confusion, but she didn't notice it. "I'm feeling like sushi."

Oh, sushi. Now that was something Minato liked eating.

"Sounds good to me," he said.

"Sweet!" Haruna beamed for a moment that lasted not too long because she noticed something was missing. "Wait, where are the pudding cups, Blue?"

Eu's gaze immediately darted towards Minato's hands. Just as Haruna suggested, there were no pudding cups with him. Not even any bags.

Minato let out a sigh. "I couldn't find any while I was out."

Haruna blinked.

"Wait, what? What do ya mean you couldn't find any, Minato?"

"Just as I said," he stated calmly, palming his face as he remembered the frustration he felt while he had been on a wild goose chase. "I went to seven different stores in the city, and none of them had the pudding cups you girls wanted. I even went to that new supermarket, Junes, and they were sold out, even though their inventory in everything else was huge, according to one of the workers. A clerk at each store told me that some girl bought all the pudding they had."

Eu couldn't stop herself from frowning a little. She was disappointed that there were no pudding cups available for Minato to buy, but she was quite surprised that every store he went to just happened to have had their pudding cup inventory wiped out. Who in the world was this girl that bought all of the pudding?

Haruna sighed. "Well, I guess I can't blame you for not finding any, Blue. It's all that girl's and Ayumu's fault..."

[Agreed.] Eu added.

"Well then," Sera started as she stood next to Minato. "Shall we find a place to dine at?"

"Let's go, if you're all ready," Minato said, touching his stomach to calm it down. As he let his sight wander for a moment, he noticed multiple kinds of games and video games sprawled throughout the

living room. "Wow... You girls must have been bored."

"Actually, we've been trying to decide who would get the last pudding cup," Haruna explained. "So far, there's no winner. I wanna win, though!"

"Hmm... What do you all want to do after we're done eating?" Minato couldn't help but ask. He felt that he was going to tag along with them, regardless of whether he wanted to or not. He thought this way because of his experiences with girls last year.

[How about bowling?] Eu suggested.

"I dunno what that is, but I'm game!" Haruna announced, raising her fist into the air.

"I do not mind as well," Sera added.

"Okay, bowling it is, then," Minato declared as he and the girls left the house to eat lunch first. He idly wondered if being a zombie would help him play the game better.

Some Time Later

School was finally over for today. Because Orito wanted Ayumu to go bowling with him, they were currently at a bowling alley. The sounds of bowling balls being rolled on the wooden floor followed by colliding with pins could be heard echoing throughout the building. The teenage boys just finished grabbing a bite to eat at MaskDonalds, where the staff wore luchador masks as part of their employee uniforms.

For some reason, there were mainly older women who were bowling around the two boys.

"Ah..." Orito gave a relieved sigh. "It's so nice being around some real women for a change. A real upgrade in scenery from all those schoolgirls in uniforms, you know?"

Ayumu took a dramatic pause before beginning a prayer.

'I don't think I can take it anymore! Please, God! I know it's too late for me, but if you're listening, just put him out of his misery!'

As if God actually listened to Ayumu's plea, a bowling ball from somewhere was heading straight for Orito's face.

With enlarged eyes and screaming at the top of his lungs, the glasses-wearing student quickly ducked to get out of the ball's trajectory as the circular and heavy object flew over his head.

'Holy shit! Did that really work?!' Ayumu couldn't help but be surprised at the supposed divine retribution he had seen.

"Oh, whoops. I guess I don't know my own strength," a male voice said as it approached Ayumu and Orito.

'Wait...' Ayumu narrowed his eyes. *'That voice...'*

"Whoa, that went really far, Blue!" An excited voice exclaimed.

Ayumu's jaw dropped.

'No.'

"Did something distract you, Minato?" A calm, feminine voice asked.

'Oh no.'

"Not really, Sera. The ball just slipped from my fingers."

Ayumu froze.

In the lane next to his, he could see some familiar faces and heads of hair. Specifically, he saw four people. One had blue hair, one other had ponytailed black hair, the third one had brown hair which included an ahoge, and the fourth one had long silver hair.

'WHY THE HELL ARE THEY HERE?!' He cried mentally. *'If Orito finds out the girls are living with me, things are going to get a whole lot more complicated!'*

There was no way Orito could take the truth that they lived with him, Ayumu thought. It was practically the black-haired male's dream to be surrounded by chicks. Ayumu had to figure out something fast, but what?

"Hey! Watch where you're throwing that!" Orito angrily said to the blue-haired boy approaching him. "You almost hit my face!"

'Crap,' Ayumu thought immediately. 'Don't come any closer, Minato-senpai!'

"Sorry. I'm not used to bowling," Minato apologized as he arrived at Ayumu's and Orito's location. "...Orito?"

Orito blinked.

"Huh? Is that you, Yuuki-san?" The black-haired student asked upon closer inspection.

'Wait, what? Yuuki-san?' Ayumu wondered. Why did Orito call his senpai that? And how did Minato know Orito?

"Ayumu! Look, your cousin's here!" Orito excitedly said to the gray-haired teen.

It was then when realization hit Ayumu. Now he remembered. Minato mentioned not long ago that he met Orito at Ayumu's school.

Despite remembering that fact, it didn't help ease Ayumu's anxiety.

"Oh... yeah... Hey..." Ayumu said almost unenthusiastically as he waved at his "cousin".

"You're here too, Ayumu?" Minato asked, seemingly not picking up his kouhai's gloom.

"Yep... I am here..." The gray-haired zombie replied before spontaneously standing up from his seat. A thought just came to his head. "I gotta hit the can."

Orito looked at him incredulously. "What the hell? You just went like, for a while. C'mon, man, your cousin is here, for crying out loud!"

Unable to see a way out of this, Ayumu dejectedly sat back down, avoiding eye contact with his senpai and female housemates, who were now standing behind Minato.

"What's wrong with you?" Orito asked Ayumu. "Hello? Your cousin is here. You know? Yuuki Makoto? Look, I don't know what's your beef with him, but the least you could do is look at him."

While acknowledging Minato's alias, Ayumu simply stared at his own seat. "Uh..."

Letting out an annoyed groan, Orito turned to Minato. "Do you know what's up with Ayumu?"

"Don't know," Minato answered with a shrug.

"Me neither," Haruna added with a flat look.

Orito's jaw dropped. He just realized that the blue-haired teenager had *three* chicks with him! And they were top-shelved babes! He actually had to do a double take to make sure he didn't die and go to heaven.

"Whoa, Yuuki-san. Who are all these fine women with you?" Orito asked, trying to sound cool.

It was after Orito asked his question when Ayumu looked up. His housemates were getting his friend's attention.

'...Depending on what they say next, I think I can turn the situation around!' Ayumu mused desperately. He had an idea.

"They're my friends," Minato said truthfully.

"No freaking way!" Orito said in disbelief. "I mean, you're a good-looking guy, Yuuki-san, don't get me wrong, but how do you even know girls like these?!"

It was with one statement that Ayumu found all of his worries draining away.

"Because we're all living with him," Haruna said simply.

Ayumu found himself letting out a huge sigh of relief as he wiped the sweat off his forehead. Technically, Haruna wasn't wrong about what she said. She, Eu, and Seraphim did live with Minato, along with Ayumu himself, but thankfully that piece of information had not been revealed. His plan of getting Orito to think that the girls lived with his senpai instead had worked flawlessly.

It was after that sigh when Ayumu noticed Orito's utter and complete shock on his face. Ayumu could practically see a ghost leaving his friend's body as said friend collapsed onto the floor.

"Uh... is this guy dead?" Haruna wondered as she pointed at Orito's prone body.

[No.] Eu answered.

"Unfortunate," Seraphim added.

Sure enough, Orito instantly stood up, gaining back a bit of his composure.

"ARE YOU SERIOUS?!" He asked loudly, losing that composure again.

"Well..." Minato started to speak, about to say that he and the girls lived with Ayumu until he noticed his kouhai behind Orito.

Ayumu was silently mouthing the words, "Go with it" while nodding hastily.

It didn't take long for the blue-haired zombie to understand what he was trying to do. He comprehended Ayumu's reason for not telling the truth. After all, he had been in a similar situation himself in the past when Gekkoukan's Culture Festival was canceled.

"Yeah. They do live with me," Minato stated calmly to Ayumu's friend. To be fair, it wasn't really a lie, so Minato didn't feel uncomfortable when he said his piece.

"And it's absolutely true!" Ayumu said, laughing awkwardly.

Orito then looked forlorn as he silently sat on a bowling ball and

stared off into the distance, possibly letting the information sink into him. Minato wondered if the truth was that shocking to him. Then again, Junpei probably would have reacted the same now that he thought about it. Both Orito and Junpei were similar in some regards.

After a while, Orito turned around and asked with a blissful expression on his face, "Tell me, Yuuki-san, how far have you gotten with them? Passed first base, I hope?"

"...What?" was all Minato had to say.

Truthfully, Minato didn't expect that question. Given his aptitude in reading people and the look that Orito had on, he could tell that the glasses-wearing student seemed to be imagining lewd scenarios that involved Minato and each of the girls.

He shuddered at trying to envision Ayumu's friend's imagination.

Minato was promptly and thankfully brought out of his thoughts by the sound of Orito repeatedly smashing his forehead against a bowling ball.

"That bastard! I'd kill to be in his position! Just tell me who!" Orito exclaimed in fury as he shook his fist. Why did bishōnens always get the girls?!

[Is he okay?] Eu couldn't help but ask.

"Obviously, he's gone insane," Sera presumed, to which Minato concurred with a small nod.

With manly (?) tears streaming down his face, Orito cried out, "Why does God hate me so much?! Why is it you, Yuuki-san, and not me?! Why are you so lucky?! Just because you're a bishōnen?!"

Minato simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Maybe."

'Ouch! That hurt from here!' Ayumu snickered in his mind.

Orito apparently took Minato's comment as an insult because he soon stormed up to the blue-haired boy and declared, "Alright, pal, it is ON! I challenge you to a bowling match!"

"Is that so?" Minato tilted his head. He was totally unfazed.

"Uh-huh, and if I win, then starting today I'm moving in with you!" Orito continued to ramble on.

"Tch. No way that will happen," Ayumu stated calmly. He was pretty confident that his senpai could win if he put in the effort. That, and Minato was a zombie after all.

Orito raised his middle finger.

"Prepare to eat your words, Ayumu!"

Seven Minutes Later

"Who knew... you were one hell of a bowler, Yuuki-san..." Orito sulked in defeat. Minato got a perfect score in their match, while Orito...

Well, it was really not worth bringing up.

"It's like they say on the commercials: Mad Bull gives you wins," Minato responded with a lie. He didn't drink Mad Bull at all in order to win. Never underestimate a zombie.

"I'm not crying, by the way. I just have allergies..." Orito claimed, despite the fact he actually was crying.

"Right..." Haruna sarcastically replied, rolling her eyes.

"That is the most pitiful boy I've seen," Sera quipped with narrowed eyes, evoking the members of the Aikawa household to simultaneously nod in agreement.

The Next Day

Night

Seraphim found herself staring at Haruna's passion for cooking in the kitchen. The brunette was wildly moving about the room while making some food, and she looked like she was having a ball. Was cooking really that intriguing?

"How can you possibly be having this much fun?" She asked Haruna, closing her eyes. When she reopened them, she saw Haruna grabbing her hand.

"Yo, ninja! Come on!" Haruna excitedly said as she dragged the vampire ninja to a wok and placed oven mitts on her hands. "You're in charge of that pot! I've got a score to settle with some veggies!"

Sera blinked. What was she supposed to create? She never cooked before in her life.

'Hmm... Perhaps I shall dabble in the culinary arts to see if I enjoy it or not,' she thought to herself.

Ayumu, Minato, and Eu could hear Haruna's shouts of joy as she cooked from the living room as they sat around the coffee table. They also noticed some lights flaring on and off behind the kitchen door.

"What the hell are they making in there?" Ayumu wondered out loud.

"We'll find out soon," Minato said with a shrug. Haruna told him that she wanted to be one who made dinner tonight, and he let her do as she pleased without hesitation.

"I guess so," Ayumu replied. He then glanced between the TV and Eu. She was currently watching her detective show. "You seem to be pretty hooked to this show, aren't you?"

Eu wrote, [One star.]

"It's okay. But I think I'd rather watch you undress..." Again, a Eu of Ayumu's imagination said to him in a seductive voice.

"...Really? You don't say..." Ayumu said, trying to not sound turned on.

Dinner was ready.

Or so Minato would like to say.

Honestly, he wasn't sure if his dinner was even considered to be food. The only things edible that he could see were the rice bowls and small vegetables that were given to everyone, distributed by Haruna.

"...What is that?" Minato questioned flatly as he stared at... whatever the hell was in the wok at the center of the coffee table. Seriously, was it purple soup or some kind of acid one would see in a laboratory? How was such a liquid possible to create with mere food ingredients?

"You took the words right out of my mouth, Senpai," Ayumu uttered, staring at the strange liquid in the wok as well.

"I asked her for some ninja skills, and this is what came out," Haruna informed the two zombies. Even she wasn't so pumped about what Seraphim had made. "It's a mystery to me."

"Looks like a tragedy..." Ayumu lamented almost quietly.

"This is my first attempt at this pastime you call cooking," Seraphim enunciated truthfully.

Ayumu frowned. "Wonderful..."

The vampire ninja overlooked his disrespectful tone as she carried on, "Actually, I find it quite fascinating."

She then looked at Minato dead in the eye.

"Well, what are you waiting for, Minato? You may taste it."

Minato fought back the urge to shiver in fear.

This was unequivocally not good for him. He had an intense feeling this would be worse than anything Fuuka could ever make.

"You want him to taste THAT?" The sheer hesitation in Ayumu's voice was painfully obvious.

"Do you see anything else that will satisfy his appetite?" Sera countered. She was right. The rice and vegetables alone weren't enough to make Minato full.

Calmly, while suppressing a sigh, Minato reached out to hopefully pick something edible up from the liquid in the wok with his chopsticks, only to discover that the portions that he dipped in had melted completely upon submersion. He nearly dropped the remaining parts of his chopsticks in sheer bewilderment.

"Ack! What the hell?!" Ayumu cried out, flinching.

"It appears that my dish might have turned out just a little spicier than I had anticipated," Sera mused, not realizing how dangerous her dish really was. She then went and placed some of the contents of her dish into an empty bowl Minato had with a ladle, the cup-shaped end of the ladle promptly falling off after she was done. "You should probably put it in your mouth before your bowl melts, Minato."

The blue-haired boy gulped.

Had he not treated Seraphim properly? Why was she trying to kill him? What did he do to deserve this?

Minato's gaze had fallen on each of his housemates as he held his bowl closer to his face. He wondered what each of them had to say

before he consumed what could be considered zombie poison.

"Come on, Minato! Slam it down the hatch!" Haruna cheered him on. At least she was enthusiastic as always.

"My condolences, Senpai," Ayumu said staidly, placing his hands together as if he was praying. "Let's hope that this... whatever this is, isn't actually capable of killing a zombie."

[If you see a light, don't go towards it.] Eu informed her servant.

He looked at Seraphim lastly. She was staring at him with a hopeful look in her eyes.

Minato could only nod in a solemn manner.

He HAD no options!

He knew that if he didn't eat Sera's dish, it would hurt their relationship drastically. And he didn't want that.

"...Here goes."

As he heard Haruna cheering "chug" encouragingly and repeatedly, he drank the dish.

In an instant, Minato blacked out, his vision fading to darkness.

Minato found himself in a place where blue velvet surrounded him when he opened his eyes again.

It would appear that he was back in the Velvet Room.

"Welcome," he heard Igor say once they made eye contact. "Do not be alarmed. You are... in a state of unconsciousness in the real world. Rest assured, you are in no danger."

Minato felt relieved. Seraphim didn't actually kill him with her food. If he did die, that would have been one of the most ironic ways to go.

"Now then. Allow me to explain why I have summoned you here,"

Igor began. "As you may already be aware of, you have created Social Links by forming new bonds with others. Continue to do so, as it will assist you in strengthening your power."

The blue-haired zombie nodded, though he still had no intention of increasing his Social Links for the sake of his potential. Having stronger Personas was just an afterthought to him.

"My time will soon be scarce. Ah, but before I forget..." Igor trailed off. "Since Elizabeth is no longer able to fulfill her duties as my assistant, I will be introducing you to my new one."

The proprietor of the Velvet Room gestured to one of the many doors in the room, and a young man dressed in blue with platinum hair stepped out of it.

"This is Theodore," Igor introduced, as the platinum-haired male came to stand next to him. "He is Elizabeth's younger brother, and from this day forth he will be taking over her duties. He will also be handling the Persona Compendium for you, should you require a Persona that you have already registered."

Elizabeth's brother bowed slightly. "As my master already said, my name is Theodore, but please, feel free to call me Theo. It's a pleasure to meet you, Arisato Minato."

"It's nice to meet you too, Theo," Minato greeted. Elizabeth had a brother, huh? That was interesting. From the looks of it, Theodore seemed to be far more formal than his sister.

"Indeed," Theo responded with a smile. The Velvet Room attendant had then found himself blinking a couple of times as a peculiar thought crossed his mind. "Beg pardon, but have we perchance encountered one another before?" Minato contemplated his question for a few seconds.

"I don't think we did," he answered, receiving a confused look from Theo.

"Hmm... Strange... Perhaps it is just my imagination, then."

It seemed that Minato's time in the Velvet Room was over, as he

started to see darkness once more.

"That is all for now," Igor said. "Until next we meet, farewell..."

" — a pulse. But he smells nice." Minato had yet to open his eyes, but he could hear Haruna's voice.

"That doesn't surprise me," he then heard Seraphim's voice.

Slowly, Minato's eyelids fluttered open. The first thing he saw was the ceiling light of the living room before a girl with silver hair looked at him.

[Welcome back.] Eu wrote to him. [Did you see a light?]

"...I saw a blue light, but it's probably not the one you're thinking of, Eu," Minato responded calmly as he picked himself up from the floor. He rubbed his stomach. Thankfully, he didn't feel like he had any indigestion or nausea.

"Oh, thank God that stuff wasn't zombie poison!" Ayumu said, sounding relieved. "But... it looks like it made Senpai a bit hysterical."

Minato looked at him with minor amusement. "I'm perfectly sane, Ayumu."

"You came back to life in the nick of time! I am starving!" Haruna exclaimed to the bluenette.

"So am I," Minato stated as a matter of fact. He genuinely wanted real food in his stomach now. "What happened to the vegetables you made, Haruna?"

Haruna laughed awkwardly while rubbing the back of her head. "They... ended up tasting like nothing."

[I'm hungry, too.] Eu added, which didn't surprise Minato in the slightest.

"You can eat this," Sera suggested, referring to her dish. "There's still plenty... left..." She picked up the wok, only to find out that her dish had made a large hole in it and disappeared.

"...No thanks, Sera," Minato politely said to her, clutching his stomach.

Not wishing for a repeat of events, Ayumu slammed a piece of paper, which was a pizza ad, onto the coffee table and proclaimed, "Screw it! No more trying to poison Minato-senpai! We're having pizza!"

Picking up the flyer, Haruna innocently asked, "I don't understand. You're gonna screw a piece of what now?"

"Pizza, and we're eating it," Ayumu explained frankly before he ordered for pizza through his cell phone. "Hello there. I'd like to order five small seafood and shrimp pizzas for rush delivery if you would. Thanks."

A light smile appeared on Minato's face.

'Finally, some actual food.'

No one noticed at the time, but the shimmer in Minato's golden eyes was dimmer than it was before.

Next: Chapter 5: Shadow of a Doubt

Social Links:

Fool (members of Ayumu's house): Rank 6

Chariot (Haruna): Rank 4

Fortune (Seraphim): Rank 5

Death (Eucliwood Hellscythe): Rank 5

Temperance (Aikawa Ayumu): Rank 5

A/N: So, here's chapter 4 finally after about three months. The holidays and personal stuff got in my way multiple times, making me feel unmotivated or giving me not enough time to work. I apologize for the wait.

Possibly the biggest reason why I took so long to update was Persona Q: Shadow of the Labyrinth. That game turned out to be *far* more engrossing than I first imagined it to be. It gave me a lot of ideas for this story as well, as some of you guys might have already noticed.

I don't have much to say for this chapter. As the title of it suggested, it's a breather from the action. Though, I did go through two drafts for this chapter until I created this version. Those early versions took far too long with information that the pacing was absolutely atrocious. I found this version to be more enjoyable to write.

Anyway, I'm glad you guys liked last chapter and Minato and Seraphim's fight. That was my first attempt at detailing a more engaging scene. I wanted it to be superior to Ayumu and Seraphim's fight in canon. How Ayumu defeated Seraphim in the anime was *so* lame. He merely threw his severed arm at her! **THAT** is how he beat her! I know I shouldn't take most of the things in *Is This a Zombie?* too seriously, but curse that fight.

A few may have noticed, but I added a table of contents at the end of the first chapter some time ago. It's a directory that tells what season and arc chapters are in. As of the end of this chapter, the first arc of this story has been completed. It's still season one, though.

For those who are curious, Minato and Naoto will absolutely cross paths. Not anytime soon, however.

I think I should explain Minato a bit more. Due to his circumstances,

he isn't exactly the same as he was in Persona 3. Most of his mannerisms remain, but here he is more... open to others. But just a little. Personally, it's easier to think of him as someone who acts similarly to the Persona 4 protagonist. He's like Yu/Souji, yet not quite. Minato's just not as cold/distant in this story as he was portrayed in the Persona 3 game, manga, and movie. He can be blunt, but he is caring, as a result of his experiences.

Also, I'm quite surprised some of you thought that I would willingly have Minato be a Magical Garment Girl. Not sure why you guys would think that.

As for Minato and Seraphim, just be patient. That moment will come.

Well, I believe I've said what needed to be said for now.

How was this chapter? Questions or concerns? I'm attempting to be more diligent in answering you guys, so leave what you want to say in your reviews or private message me. There are some things that I can't say because of spoilers, but it does not hurt to ask.

Thanks for reading!

Reviewers:

Junky: As I stated in my Author's Note last chapter, I don't hate Ayumu. I like him a lot. Most of the things that happened to him last chapter also occurred in the anime, so that wasn't me being a sadist to him. As for the second part of your review: Arguably, but could you honestly say Eu was interesting from the beginning of *Is This a Zombie?*

Sacchin: It sure will be fun.

Kinunatz: For now, yes.

idea. getthe: I don't plan on involving the female protagonist in any shape or form in this story.

GreyMan19: Pre-Persona 4 Naoto.

AEE: Mitsuru does like Minato.

Ilal-2: If I ever decide to include him, Yu/Souji won't be making an appearance anytime soon. It'd be interesting seeing Minato interact with the Investigation Team, I'll say that. I'm pretty sure this chapter answered your question about Naoto. Also, I got your private message. No, they will not. Sorry for not answering sooner.

nono7: That's one interpretation of bringing out weapons and equipment, and a common one I see in fanfics. It was never confirmed in the game, however, so I went with a more realistic approach.

Seeker213: Nice to see you understand what I'm trying to convey. And now you know how Minato was affected by Seraphim's cooking.

The 10th Wand: With your mentality, you must have enjoyed this chapter then.

Blazedragon94: Perhaps.

Treant Balewood: Originally, I had in mind for Eu and Minato to stay in Iwatodai. But the concept of Minato traversing through the city without garnering some attention seemed unbelievable to me. I felt that Eu and Minato going to Tokyo and meeting Ayumu held more potential, which was why I decided to go with that instead.

Selias: Did this chapter answer your question?

Lewamus Prime: All I can say is have patience. Everything you're wondering about has been and or will be given some closure.

More More More: Haha... I don't consider myself a god (at least that's what I think you said), but I do appreciate your enthusiasm for this story.

DarkPirateKing69: I hope this chapter explained more about Minato and Seraphim. You know, it's funny. How I'm trying to portray Minato here is the practically the opposite of how The Crimson Lord is, or was, portraying him. Minato here is trying to move on with his (undead) life, accepting the fact he can't go back and deciding to make new friends. He isn't clinging to his past very much. But, he still thinks about it from time to time.

rc48177: You'll just have to wait and find out for yourself.

Shadow of a Doubt

Chapter 5: Shadow of a Doubt

[The stars in the sky are eternally beautiful. But the constantly changing stars are beautiful too.] — Eucliwood Hellscythe

Midnight

The month of May passed, and now it was June. Time seemed to fly by these days for Ayumu. He was wondering whether or not he'd truly return to a "normal life" as he stared at the ceiling of his room, lying on his bed. The more he thought about it, the more he started to grasp it'd be almost impossible so long as he remained a zombie... or whatever he technically was now. Not to mention he was now housing another zombie, a necromancer, a Magical Garment Girl, and a vampire ninja.

He knew he wanted something to spice up his life, but he had no damn clue that all of this would happen! What was he, a part of some comedy anime? These past few weeks have been so rich with zaniness ever since he was revived.

...That isn't to say he didn't appreciate at least part of it. In fact, he felt indebted to Minato and Eucliwood forever from when they saved him. He had grown rather fond of the pair. Ever since he let them live with him, it was as if they were about as natural in his lifestyle as going to school. And even though Haruna and Seraphim were rather new additions to the equation, in spite of their abrasive personalities, he couldn't really say that he disliked them. With three girls and luckily another dude residing with him, things for Ayumu just seemed... nice. Like he found his place in life.

He could deal without getting fried like bacon when exposed to sunlight, however. Or dressing in pink drag to fight supernatural creatures. Or being called a pervert. Or the time he and the gang encountered that chicken Megalo. Haruna still had nightmares from time to time; it was best to leave it at that.

This was one heck of an afterlife for Ayumu.

Pinching the bridge of his nose, the gray-haired teen was about to get off his bed to grab a late night snack until he noticed two distinct green eyes staring him down from above.

"You know, there is a front door to my room," Ayumu dryly addressed his vampire ninja housemate, who for some reason had taken to using the upper frameworks of his house to navigate around on occasion instead of walking on the floor like a normal person.

After the first few times of her doing this, he had gotten used to it. He would've also accepted her using his balcony door, but whatever. It was still weird, though.

"I simply prefer this method," Seraphim snapped back.

Suppressing a sigh, Ayumu was the first to break the ice, "I'll bite: is there something up?"

"I've been meaning to ask, why do Minato and Lady Hellscythe reside with a maggot like you?" Sera asked him.

Overlooking her usual nickname for him, Ayumu said, "It's a no-brainer, to be honest. I mean, you were there when Senpai told us who he was and how he got here. He's been through a lot for some guy who isn't technically an adult yet, so he probably just wants to live a peaceful life."

'Or rather, as peaceful of a life as a zombie can get,' Ayumu added in his mind before continuing.

"As for Eu, she's not much of a talker, but I'd like to say she's almost the same. Just for maybe slightly different reasons. My folks are never home because of their jobs and constant travelling, so I

figured I could give those two a place to live because they helped me out."

Ayumu wasn't really sure what Seraphim's intentions were right now, despite him letting her live here for a while already. He recalled that she was originally sent here to have Eucliwood help out the vampire ninja village with something. With what in particular, he had no idea. Things did seem to change slowly once she dropped that bombshell of Minato being a messiah and whatnot after those two fought. She didn't impose her original plea on them anymore. If it weren't for his senpai being here, the gray-haired zombie could only imagine how things would've gone without him.

Well, as long as things kept going the way they were now, Ayumu didn't really mind having Seraphim here. Eucliwood seemed indifferent, but Minato and Haruna on the other hand took a liking to her already. He also couldn't help but acknowledge her capabilities and find trading blows with her to be amusing at times. Her nickname for him notwithstanding, she must've had some form of respect towards him if she persisted with staying in his house.

"Hm, that is rather pleasant coming from you," the black-haired girl responded, although Ayumu wasn't sure how to interpret it. "However, I must express that I feel there is something more to Lady Hellscythe specifically. A hunch, if you will. And I'd like to know exactly what it is that she is hiding. She or even Minato could prove to be beneficial to my village."

'Is this a woman's intuition kicking in or something? I wonder why she's this invested in those two,' the teenager pondered.

Now that Sera had said her piece, Ayumu began to contemplate. Was there really more to them that they didn't share yet?

"I'm sure you and I both know that asking me won't get us very far. If you're that curious, why don't you ask one of them?" The zombie suggested. "I don't know about Eucliwood for now, but I think you could get something out of Minato-senpai. Seems like you two have been hitting it off."

It was dark in Ayumu's bedroom, but he was able to make out

Seraphim huffing after his remark.

"Very well then, I shall," she stated before leaving Ayumu alone. True to her status as a ninja, she came and went expeditiously.

'Eh, what a strange girl.' The zombie shrugged before getting up from his bed to fetch a snack, but not without briefly reflecting on his recent conversation as he paused from opening his door. He had to admit, there was still a ton he didn't know about his fellow zombie and his necromancer master. And he truly wished he could cross that gap already. Time would tell when that will happen. *'One of these days, I would like to get to know those two more as well.'*

As of late, Minato had taken to sitting out on Ayumu's porch during most evenings. He was currently doing just that. The gentle, summer air was calming and perfect to wind down, letting built-up tension slip away.

It was during these times where the bluenette would look up at the sky, directly at the moon if it was visible.

After the journey he undertook in the past year, it wasn't a stretch to say that Minato staring upwards to watch the moon and sky made him feel nostalgic. Just seeing a non-yellow moon and no hideously green sky once midnight struck put him at ease the more he did this. Both were visual achievements in his eyes, both signs of peace and new days to come. They showed all the efforts he and his friends made were absolutely worth it.

This world he worked so hard to save wasn't by any means perfect, but that didn't mean humanity should give up.

After all, he himself is a living example.

Or rather, as lively of an example as a zombie could get.

He couldn't help but wonder often how the people in his past life were faring on nights like this. He wondered if Junpei was doing a decent job of maintaining average grades at Gekkoukan hopefully. Maybe Yukari kept him in line with her usual snarky self? Was

Mitsuru fine with taking the reigns of the Kirijo Group after her father's passing? No doubt she got into an excellent university after graduation this past March. Did Akihiko get into a good one too? He wouldn't be surprised if Mitsuru helped or pressured him into one, considering the redhead's influence. Probably kept up a daily workout routine with protein, though. Ken was still going to have to do some growing up as he continued school. Koromaru was likely being a good dog as always. Did Aigis decide to continue school? He wasn't sure about what the android would be doing right now to be honest.

And what of Naoto? He felt bad because it had been so long since he had the chance to talk with her. Before getting caught up with the Dark Hour, he had resided with her and their grandfather at the Shirogane estate. His mother was a Shirogane herself prior to marrying his father, whose last name was Arisato. The Shirogane lineage consisted of detectives in the past decades, with Naoto embracing that tradition herself. Minato had only spent one year living with them while continuing his education, and in all honesty it was the best living arrangement he had experienced until he was accepted into Gekkoukan High School. His grandfather was a rather reserved individual, more so than Minato was, but the blue-haired teen sensed that he cared about him and Naoto.

Speaking of the pint-sized bluenette, Minato was curious if she had grown taller. She did complain about her short stature from time to time. He was initially surprised by how nosy she was when living with her, hounding him with questions about himself, but he surmised it came with the territory of being a detective. Naoto's persistence proved to wear down enough on the barrier Minato placed himself in during his life for cracks to emerge. The young detective was stubborn but driven about her occupation and ideals, wanting to be taken seriously in her field.

He wished they could've spent more time together, especially with how much he had changed within just a year. They even developed a sibling relationship prior to him leaving. In fact, there were some nights where he did yearn to be with everyone he bonded with again.

That was one of the various downsides to dying: leaving the people

you care about behind.

"Minato?"

The individual in question was broken out of his reverie as he twirled his body around to see Seraphim poking out from the sliding door that led to the inside of the house.

"Oh, it's you, Sera." He motioned for her to sit next to him, and she soon heeded the gesture as she sat down after closing the door behind them. He shifted his attention onto her as he then continued, "It's nice out, isn't it?"

While letting herself embrace the pleasant breeze, she nodded happily.

"Indeed. It is a lovely night. I have noticed that you come to sit out here on most nights like this, so I assumed you were here."

The bluenette eye-smiled before returning to what he was previously doing as he spoke.

"Hm, you know me well. I suppose I have been doing this a lot lately."

Seraphim perceived the Persona-user viewing the moon as she examined his face. She had a hunch she knew why. But now she didn't how to proceed without being rude. So the pair then sat together in silence, taking in the summer nature and atmosphere. It was rather tranquil, honestly. The vampire ninja wasn't able to relax fully for some time while balancing her responsibilities. What certainly helped was that the Messiah was ordinarily mellow to be around. Even if when they met wasn't by what many would consider a good impression, the two managed to get along anyway. That sentiment was also extended towards Haruna and Eucliwood. She was on the fence with Ayumu, nevertheless, but did give him credit where it was due for being chosen and supported by both Eucliwood and Minato.

She didn't know what to anticipate at the time, but looking back at everything, being stationed here with everyone had been

surprisingly refreshing.

"Is something on your mind?" The next thing she knew, Minato's gaze had fallen on her once more. "You're looking at me as if I grew horns."

"I would like to discuss with you on thoughts I've been having, yes," Sera replied, startled but able to maintain her composure. She adopted a more formal posture as she began to speak more.

"Forgive me if I am overstepping my boundaries, but I would like to ask you a few questions regarding yourself and Lady Hellscythe, as a vampire ninja of my village. I am aware I haven't known either you or her for a reasonable amount of time, and I don't believe I am able to receive much from Lady Hellscythe, so that is why I have mainly come to you. If you do not feel comfortable in answering for the time being, please feel free to object and then I shall withdraw."

Minato tilted his head but gestured for her to continue.

"Go ahead. I don't mind. I'll answer as best as I can."

Seraphim briefly bowed her head.

"Thank you, Minato. Firstly, I would like to address the, as humans sometimes say, elephant in the room in regards to Lady Hellscythe. One of the reasons in which I have been residing with you recently is due to my village still requiring her assistance. Which leads me to wonder about whether or not something has caused her to guard her emotions."

This piqued Minato's curiosity. Come to think of it, he didn't know a whole lot about his necromancer master, despite pledging himself to her and being with her for this long. He had always assumed Eu wasn't much of a talker and would open up over time. He was so accustomed to all sorts of people that her being mute wasn't the least bit odd to him.

"I could talk to Eucliwood about all this, but I can't guarantee any promises. Why is it that your village needs her?" The Persona-user asked. That was one question that had left him curious ever since Sera arrived.

"I was charged by my superior to retrieve Lady Hellscythe so that she may revive my village's deceased elder. Preferably, I would have Lady Hellscythe come of her own will," the vampire ninja stated. "It was why I challenged you and Ayumu a while back. My village could use our elder for guidance in our war."

Minato nodded.

"Ah, I see. That does make sense. I don't know if I'll be able to convince Eu to change her mind right now. She doesn't seem to revive people freely."

"Would it then be possible for you to come with me and assist my clan in Lady Hellscythe's stead?"

That was a request Minato certainly didn't expect to hear from her. She wanted him to be involved in vampire ninja affairs?

"Could you elaborate a bit more?" The blue-haired zombie inquired calmly. What Sera will say next would determine his answer.

"You would be a very valuable asset to us. Perhaps your presence alone can stop this war that we've been forced to endure for decades. I don't doubt any of the leaders would be foolish enough to defy you due to your prominence, let alone risk garnering Lady Hellscythe's ire should harm befall you," she collectedly explained in-depth.

Minato found it ironic after hearing her piece in regards to the possibility of vampire ninja higher-ups challenging him when she herself did just that. Surely they were wise enough to not resort to violence immediately, but that remained to be seen.

"You do make good points, Sera. I'll have to think on this for a while before I can give you a proper answer," he declared. He wasn't certain if involving himself in supernatural scuffles was the best thing to do. At the same time, he could tell this matter was affecting Seraphim. He wondered if he had become a bit of a do-gooder because he was assisting people so frequently these past two years. When he and Eucliwood moved to Tokyo, he surely didn't foresee himself getting into more conflicts, let alone being in the

circumstances he was a part of now. Was this fate's way of saying that he was a magnet for weirdness?

Sera held hope that Minato would oblige, but she believed this was all she could do for the time being. She didn't want to dissuade him with any further pleas.

"Understood. In the meantime, I shall continue to remain here. Is that acceptable with you?" She asked.

"Of course. You've been here this long, so why not?" Minato simply said. He did feel as if Sera had made herself an integral part of the group already. "Besides, it's nice having you around."

The vampire ninja smiled at that remark.

"I am honored, Minato." Sera seemed to have more on her mind evidently, because Minato noticed that she was lightly blushing for some reason. "Moving on, I... I wanted to know if you would indulge a lowly vampire ninja such as myself in the ways of cooking."

Only a "Huh?" escaped from Minato's lips once he heard those words.

The blue-haired zombie couldn't help but inwardly admit that this scene was cute. For someone like Seraphim, who usually acted so dignified with formalities, to swallow her pride and ask him to tutor her was quite a nice change honestly.

"You want to learn from me?"

"But of course! I have grown rather fond of cooking, and I know I am but a mere amateur as of now. After having the pleasure of dining on your meals, I cannot think of anyone better to instruct me." Sera then quickly bowed down. "It would be an honor to have you teach me the proper methods of culinary arts."

Minato rubbed the backside of his head. It seemed Seraphim was dead set on learning more about cooking, and he didn't even consider himself a master chef. He found it sort of admirable.

Well, if this meant she could possibly make food that wasn't

poisonous, Minato would be doing himself and his housemates a favor. Perhaps he could learn new recipes with her. All this reminded him of how he helped his fellow SEES member, Yamagishi Fuuka, with her cooking by offering tips and taste-testing. If she could improve, then so could Sera.

"Alright, Sera. I'll teach you how to cook." The boy then raised a single finger in the air. "But on one condition."

Said vampire ninja lifted her head to look at him inquisitively.

"Yes?"

"You'll be my sparring partner."

"Your... sparring partner?" She was understandably confused.

Minato dug into his pockets and took out his Evoker, holding it up in front of Seraphim.

"When we fought, it got me thinking. You were able to disarm me of my Evoker, and I felt like I didn't have too many options in the heat of the moment. You helped me realize I had grown to rely too much on my Personas." He then placed the gun-shaped object between the two of them. "Even though they are a part of me, without my Evoker, I was kinda screwed when I had to face Shadows. Considering recent events and the fact that I'm a zombie, who knows what can happen next. I need to be prepared. Plus, out of all of us, I think you're the most well-rounded fighter that I can keep up with."

Seraphim blinked while considering what she heard.

The main fighters here other than Minato and Sera were Ayumu and Haruna. Ayumu was... well, to Sera, just a maggot. He and Minato could only go so far together with their zombie abilities. Haruna wasn't exactly a bad choice, but the vampire ninja thought the brunette's personality hindered her real potential. What Minato had been saying was coherent for anyone in his position that wished to better themselves. She may learn a thing or two from him. They could get stronger and smarter together with this kind of proposition,

in both combat and cooking. There was no way she was going to pass this opportunity up.

"If you believe I am worthy, then I accept. I will not lie when I say that the thought of training with you had crossed my mind as well. You are much too kind, Minato," the ponytailed girl said, allowing herself to look happy. She couldn't believe that she was going to learn and train with the Messiah himself.

"Ha, well I could say the same about you, Sera," Minato replied, looking content himself. He suddenly stood up and held out his hand towards Sera. "Do you want to have a quick spar with me then? No time like the present, as they say."

Surprise was written on Sera's face initially by how sudden this was, but then she firmly grasped his hand with hers.

"It would be my pleasure, Minato," she reciprocated with a grin. Honorable as always. He did like that about her.

It was at this very moment where a realization dawned on him. He was getting used to her—getting used to everything now. He was growing fonder of the vampire ninja, the rest of their group, and this lifestyle with each passing day.

The past was the past. And he knew deep in his heart that he couldn't stay in it forever.

Looking at Seraphim's face right now reminded him that his new life wasn't all that bad with friends like her.

'This is my new way of life. Maybe the dead can move on.'

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Fortune Arcana..."

Ayumu silently smiled to himself. He happened to have overheard his senpai and the black-haired girl getting along while fetching some leftover pizza from the other night. With his task accomplished, he returned to his bedroom for the night.

'Smooth as usual, Minato-senpai.'

It was a dreadful scene.

There was seemingly no hope to be had.

Only despair.

How could a mere mortal withstand the onslaught of death itself?

It was painful to witness.

A normal person would've gave up and accepted the end.

But not this individual.

It was almost poetic, humanity rising up to defy fate.

Despite all odds, the impossible was made possible.

Life continued.

The end was no more.

The dread had been burned away.

Fleeting, it was, at the expense of a soul that will forever linger on.

Morning

Eucliwood Hellsythe found herself groggily rising from her bed, rubbing her eyes and letting out a small yawn. She glanced over to the clock near her bed and noticed that it was past 8 in the morning. Normally, she would be up a little earlier, right before Ayumu went to school. The small girl could've sworn she heard something that disturbed her slumber as she drowsily gazed around.

As if on cue, a few knocks on her door resounded from outside a moment later.

"Hey, Eu. Are you up yet?" The voice belonged to her wild card of a servant, who sounded concerned. "Sorry if I woke you up, but I wanted to know if you were okay. You didn't come down for breakfast yet."

The necromancer slowly got out of her bed and walked to her door to open it. She was greeted by a mop of blue hair that she was so familiar with.

[Good morning, Minato.] were the words she chose to acknowledge her servant, who was already dressed in casual clothes.

Meanwhile she was still in her pajamas, wearing her chestplate and the armor piece over her forehead.

"Morning to you too, sunshine," Minato answered as he patted Eu's head. "Looks like the roles have been reversed this time, hm."

In response to her treatment, Eu simply drew a pout face on her notepad.

"Alright, I'll stop," Minato resigned with a small chuckle and his hands raised. "Would you like to eat anything though, Eu? Everyone else already ate, but I can make you something. Except toast. Somehow Sera burned my bread, and now the toaster's busted."

[I'll have eggs, please. Also, how did she do that?] Eu couldn't help but be interested.

"Believe me, I wish I knew. I was watching her like a hawk too..." The blue-haired zombie sighed as he fixed his bangs. "We're gonna need a new toaster. Maybe now would also be a good time for me to find a part-time job so that we're financially stable. We can't rely on my money or Ayumu's allowances forever."

[But who will take care of me?] Eu countered, staring with slightly narrowed eyes.

If this were Ayumu, he'd probably be sweating bullets right now. But

this was the older of the two servants Eu owned, so it was a different story.

"Don't worry, I'm searching for just a part-time job. I have to take care of Master, after all," Minato stated with a tinge of teasing, maintaining a straight face. "Besides, Sera and Haruna are here now too. I only need to find a place where I can get a decent amount of pay. Maybe I can work while Ayumu's at school. Although, I am a little limited on options due to me not having any official documents. Not to mention I'm legally dead. So, the search might take a bit."

Eucliwood tilted her head, thinking. Her servant's words made sense. Hell, she even supported his intentions. He just wanted to make money to help her and everybody living here. But where would he be able to find someone who would hire him under his conditions?

The pair were then interrupted by the sound of someone running up the stairs, which turned out to be Haruna gripping onto what appeared to be manga.

"Hey, Blue! Can I ask you if this kind of thing actually does happen in this world?" Haruna excitedly asked, pointing to the cover of her manga with her face somewhat flushed. The cover displayed two boys being rather close to each other.

Raising an eyebrow, Minato looked over Haruna's shoulder and glanced at the content as the girl flipped through a few pages. He then frowned.

"Haruna, where... where did you even get this manga?" He asked the brunette.

"I bought it the last time me and you went to the convenience store, remember?" The Magical Garment Girl claimed, looking proud of herself. "It looked interesting, and so I thought it was only natural for a genius like myself to analyze it to better understand this world."

Narrowing his eyes for a brief moment as he tried to recall the supposed events, Minato then snapped his fingers.

"Oh, that did happen."

As Haruna and Minato began to humorously go back and forth with each other about the former's newfound knowledge, Eu seemed to be in deep thought after hearing the mention of "manga" while holding her pen to her chin.

This was possibly the time she could call in a favor.

Noon

"Huh, this is underwhelming," Minato noted as he stood outside of a rather cheap-looking apartment complex during midday. He decided to leave the house in the care of the girls because he accepted a request from Eucliwood not too long after he made her breakfast. There wasn't anything to worry about due to him usually going out during the day for shopping or sightseeing, and he was sometimes accompanied by his female housemates too.

Today's agenda, however, consisted of him finding a job. And apparently, his necromancer master believed she knew someone who could pay him for work.

Digging into his pockets, he brought out a note that Eu wrote for him which had the name of the person who lived in this area.

"Naegleria Nebiros... Yeah, this definitely sounds like someone Eu would know," Minato mused, smiling wryly from the very odd-sounding name. It was a dead giveaway. He had assumed an Underworlder like Eu living in the human realm was uncommon, but now he was starting to have his doubts. It just goes to show the Persona-user still had a ways to go in regards to expanding his horizons.

He ascended a flight of stairs and approached a door that displayed "202" on it. The number was also written on the note he had, so this must be the place. Quite a place to live for someone who was supposedly an Underworlder, but on the other hand perhaps it was

better this way to keep attention off one's self. At least a vast majority of people probably weren't even aware of anything supernatural actually existing, otherwise history would've been very different.

One doorbell ring. Two doorbell rings. And then three doorbell rings.

No response.

"Anybody home?" Minato wondered aloud. Hopefully someone heard him from inside. Was Naegleria out right now? The boy then knocked on the door a few times.

He stopped once he realized the door suddenly popped open just a little. Hesitating, he sincerely hoped he wasn't about to stumble upon some cheesy horror scene as he grabbed the doorknob and pulled it just enough to where he can barely see the interior. Not wanting to be rude, he peeked inside to see if anyone was there and not trespass.

Without warning, the door bursted open quickly as a figure fell soon afterwards.

Right onto the unsuspecting zombie.

"Whoa!" Minato suddenly felt a lot of pressure on his chest as he attempted to prevent this person from falling to the floor. He managed to grab them by the shoulders and notice that this person was a slim, fairly tall adult woman with long red hair. She was wearing a tank top and shorts.

After a few seconds, the "pressure" Minato was feeling turned out to be this woman's chest. She was *really* well-endowed. He believed her chest was even bigger than Seraphim's.

'Why am I even thinking of such a thing right now?' Shaking his head, the bluenette then inspected the woman to check on her condition. She appeared to be out cold. "Hey, are you okay? Don't tell me you're dead."

Waiting for a reaction, all Minato got were a few snores from the lady.

Did she fall asleep as she was answering the door?

"...Seriously?" Minato couldn't help but sigh.

Some time later, the redhead had managed to wake up after Minato gently tapped her shoulder and now the two were inside the apartment. She turned out to be the person Eucliwood was talking about: Naegleria Nebiros. Once he explained what he was doing at her home, while also mentioning Eu's name, she leisurely let him into her apartment. Before they could discuss anything further, they were then interrupted by a call from her phone, so Naegleria told the bluenette to make himself at home while she tried to finish her talk with the person on the line.

Naegleria's interior was large enough for a single occupant, coupled with a bedroom, shower, kitchen and a living room. It wasn't messy per se, but any teenage boy would've had a field day if they could see what Minato was witnessing. He could spot bras, panties, and what appeared to be pages of manga hanging from clotheslines just in the main room itself. There were a couple stacks of manga spread out on the floor, and Minato decided to read one of them to kill time. He had sat down at the coffee table in the center of the room, while Naegleria was at her desk in the corner, which also had a computer.

Needless to say, now he knew the woman's occupation.

'Ah, *she's a mangaka*,' the zombie noted inwardly, while flipping through the pages of the manga he held. The conversation Naegleria was having on the phone and pages of manga in the room proved his assumption also. He wasn't sure what to expect when his master gave him Naegleria's name and location, but finding out that an Underworlder was a mangaka surprised him. What a time to be alive, or undead. Now he was wondering what he would do here if she gave him a job.

"Yes, thank you. Is there any chance that I can get another day maybe? Oh, there's an overage fee... Well, I guess it can't be helped if that's your policy," Naegleria rambled as she continued her phone call. "No no, I'll have it done by tomorrow night!" Her phone call

seemed to have ended as she closed her cellphone and sighed. She then directed her attention towards Minato. "Sorry about that! I have quite a bit on my plate. Drawing manga's no easy feat, let me tell you."

"I bet it is," the teenager noted, finishing his observations on her manga. "This is good work, Miss Nebiros."

Naegleria let out a small chuckle.

"Don't say Miss, it makes me feel old. You can just call me Nene!" She then yawned but continued to talk. "Besides, I was never one for formalities. You agree, right, Messiah~?"

It wasn't his first time being called that, but Minato believed he may never get used to that title.

"So you do know who I am?" He asked her.

"Of course! You're very popular in the Underworld, you know." Nene nodded her head. "The Fall was always such a dreary thing to hear about, and since you prevented that, you're practically a celebrity. You got a few nicknames too: the Messiah, the Hero of Souls, et cetera. Lots of people admire you."

"Really? I'm flattered," Minato remarked with a faint smile. He wasn't too taken aback from the Underworld knowing about his reputation. If the vampire ninjas somehow learned about him, then this wasn't too far-fetched. Word got around seemingly quick in the supernatural societies. "I was only doing what I could to save everybody."

"Hehe, it's good to see you're humble too. I sometimes wondered what it'd be like to interact with you in person, and here we are. Guess I have Eucliwood to thank for that," the redhead admitted. There seemed to be a mix of sadness and seriousness in her voice as she smiled, which went away so fast Minato didn't even notice. "How is she, by the way? She giving you any trouble?"

"She's quiet, but very nice to be around when you get to know her."

"Ah, that's the Eu I know and love..." Naegleria mused happily,

before promptly dozing off on the spot.

The blue-haired zombie sweatdropped. He supposed Nene's job would take a lot out of her if she was trying to meet deadlines often.

"Nn... I'm up, I'm up," she uttered sleepily, snapping out of her daze. Releasing a yawn while covering her mouth, she refocused on Minato. "Oh yeah, you were saying earlier that you wanted a job and Eucliwood recommended yours truly?" The boy nodded his head. "I can't say I was intending to hire someone today, but in all honesty I think you came at just the right time. Maybe I do need someone to keep me in line so I can finish my manga chapters more often."

Minato's eyes widened a little.

"Does this mean—"

"That you're hired?" Naegleria finished for him, winking. "You got it, kid! You're gonna help me with my manuscripts, drawing, editing, and whatever else I might need while I handle the main workload. Sound good to you?" She extended her hand to Minato for a handshake, should he accept her offer.

Allowing himself to grin, Minato gripped Naegleria's hand with his own. Finding a part-time job went more smoothly than he thought, and he was sure he was up to the task of working for the redheaded mangaka. For a first impression, he assumed that she was a capable woman, despite her sleeping tendencies, and there was probably more to her than she let on because she knew Eucliwood. Nevertheless, he already felt comfortable around her and that was good enough for the time being.

"I won't let you down, Nene," the Persona-user said confidently.

"Let me down? Honey, I have a feeling I shouldn't let *you* down," Naegleria replied, laughing. "I'm pretty much a narcoleptic because my sleeping schedule is all out of whack, so I hope you can bear with me!"

"Thou art I... and I am thou... Thou hast established a new bond... Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a

Persona of the Empress Arcana..."

"Hm, this can't be worse than the time a businessman tried to teach me questionable sales tactics," Minato admitted, remembering the moments he spent with Tanaka at Paulownia Mall.

Nene giggled.

"You and me are gonna get along great, Minato."

Seraphim was feeling annoyed. She couldn't help but pace back and forth in the kitchen as she gripped her soup ladle tightly.

"What were you thinking, Haruna?" She scolded the younger girl, who was kneeling in front of the older female. There was a visible large lump on the brunette's head as she sniffled.

Miso soup was supposed to be on the menu for lunch today, and Minato had left Sera a recipe he wrote for her to follow exactly to a T. Before he left for his job-searching earlier, he made it damn clear to the black-haired girl to not diverge from his instructions *at all*. Luckily, she was a dutiful follower and did what his recipe listed.

That was until Haruna freaked out the moment she spotted Sera preparing the pot of soup and decided to toss it to the floor. It was truly a waste of food.

"I-I don't know!" Haruna exclaimed, trying to ease the pain on her head. "I'm sorry, ninja... I was afraid that you were gonna make something unholy like the last time you cooked."

The vampire ninja felt a vein pop once she heard that, but she took a deep breath to calm down. Getting even more angry at Haruna wasn't going to solve anything. The bigger issue at hand was that their lunch was ruined. And Seraphim was following Minato's written recipe for miso soup perfectly too.

"Apology accepted, Haruna. You were correct to be wary of me given my past transgression. But now I have Minato to guide me," Sera said, squatting down to pat Haruna's head. "In the future, I

would appreciate it if you didn't interfere with my cooking unless I ask you for something specifically. And I'm sorry for hitting you."

The Magical Garment girl began to feel better from the headpats and blushed. "W-well, if Blue is instructing you, then there's nothing that I have to worry about!"

Sera let out a sigh.

"I suppose this means we'll be having instant ramen for lunch. Not a bad alternative to be honest."

Haruna fistpumped when she heard that. She quite liked instant ramen. The pair stood up to get ready as the phone in the living room rang, which was where Eucliwood was currently at. The necromancer had answered it then walked over to the kitchen, gesturing for Sera to talk on the phone.

"Hello?" She greeted whoever was on the other line.

"Sera? It's me, Minato. Are you busy?" The person on the phone was revealed to be her blue-haired housemate.

"I was about to prepare lunch for Haruna and Lady Hellscythe, but is something the matter, Minato?" Sera inquired.

"Ah, okay. When you're done with that, could you come over to where I am to help me with something? Eucliwood knows my location, so she can point the way."

She made eye contact with the silver-haired girl momentarily, and the latter nodded her head.

Seraphim continued, "Absolutely. I shall rendezvous with you shortly."

The female vampire ninja wasted no time in heading out of the house after she finished her ramen lunch with Eucliwood and Haruna, choosing to vanish with her dramatic leafy exit in front of them. Traversing through Tokyo as a vampire ninja certainly had its

perks as she was could jump from one rooftop to the next until she was forced to ascend taller buildings or descend to the ground. Even though it didn't seem like Minato was in a dire situation when he had called, she didn't want to keep him waiting.

Fortunately, the Messiah's location wasn't very far from the house. She had just arrived at the address Eucliwood informed her of fairly quickly. She wasn't too certain as to why Minato was here. He had mentioned earlier prior to leaving that he was searching for a job, but the quest led him to a scruffy-looking apartment building? She should've asked Eucliwood about this more before she left, but what's done is done.

She found herself at the door that displayed 202 on it, just as the necromancer had said. Minato should be inside. Sera rang the doorbell once and waited for a response.

"The door's ope—" Minato's voice was the answer she got, but then she heard a loud thud inside as if the boy may have fallen down or something to that extent.

Bracing herself, she twisted the doorknob and entered the apartment swiftly.

She was immediately rendered speechless by what she was seeing.

On the floor a couple of feet in front of her was Minato, apparently being pinned down by a redheaded woman who was only wearing a bath towel that was wrapped around her body as she lay on top of him.

When Minato saw Seraphim's gaze, he couldn't help but feel like the air became colder all of a sudden.

"Uh-oh."

"I see now..." It took a few seconds, but Seraphim finally managed to speak. She could feel her killer instinct welling up as a dark aura enveloped her person, her typical green eyes flaring bright red. She formed a leaf blade as she slowly approached her blue-haired housemate. "Not to worry, Minato. I shall take care of this harpy that

is sexually harassing you posthaste."

Minato's hands were tied, or rather, he didn't want to make any sudden moves like touching parts that he shouldn't make contact with whatsoever. This already looked so bad. Was this about to get any worse?

The vampire ninja stopped in her tracks once she detected the nearly naked woman beginning to move, the latter letting out a yawn as she then picked herself off of the boy she was just on. She stretched, her towel somehow not falling off thankfully, and looked around her.

"Oh... sorry, must've dozed off again."

"Nene, how can someone fall asleep that fast after getting a shower? You even tripped and fell on me, and you still went out like a light." Minato facepalmed while he sat up straight.

"Haha, I told you I'd be a handful!" The woman Minato addressed as Nene laughed cheerfully, shamelessly remaining barely clothed. The bluenette sighed. "By the way, did you get what I asked for?"

"Sure did," Minato replied, pointing to a plastic bag on the floor near them, which contained several sodas and snacks.

"Ah, great! You're a doll, Minato!" The red-haired lady exclaimed happily.

Observing the scene before her, Sera couldn't help but be bewildered. Her male housemate wasn't in any real danger? She lowered her guard as her eyes returned to their normal green and she let her sword disperse.

"So... Minato. Was there, or was there not any untoward behavior between you two before I arrived?" Sera inquired, tilting her head. She wanted to be absolutely sure of the circumstances prior to making any more judgments.

"Come on! Even if there was, what are you gonna do? Minato is pretty handsome, it's surprising no one snatched him up yet," Nene stated with a smile on her face. Sera couldn't tell if she was serious

or teasing her. "Unless of course, you two are an item?"

The golden eyes of Minato widened slightly after he heard that, and Seraphim...

If Seraphim never showed herself being flustered before, it was definitely noticeable now.

"What?! Just what are you insinuating, you tramp?!" The vampire ninja shouted, her cheeks flushed while pointing directly at Nene.

"Ahahaha!" Nene bursted into laughter from the girl's strong reaction.

The redhead's guffawing was cut short once Minato bopped her on the head with a roll of newspaper.

"Alright, you've had your fun, Nene. Time to get back to work now. And put on some clothes already," he told the older adult.

"Aw, you're no fun, Mina-kun," Nene pouted, massaging the spot where she was whacked.

"Less talk, more dressing. You have a deadline to meet," the Wild Card ordered sternly. The mangaka sighed as she got up and went into her bedroom to get changed, leaving Minato and Seraphim alone together.

Releasing a sigh of his own, Minato turned to his friend and spoke, "Sorry about that, Sera. Naegleria likes to tease a lot."

Immediately after Nene left the room, Sera had started to recollect herself. She did still feel a tad embarrassed because of how provoked she was moments ago. To her, it felt so strange. She was normally so calm and collective, even when riled up, but her outburst was so sudden and foreign.

"It is of no consequence to me. I simply wanted to put a stop to her vivid imagination," Sera replied calmly. She somehow managed to snap back to her usual persona in no time flat. "But never mind that, who exactly is this woman, Minato?"

"Someone from the Underworld, and Eucliwood's friend," the blue-haired boy answered honestly. "Her name is Naegleria Nebiros, but she likes to be called Nene. She's also my boss now."

"Your boss? Does that mean you succeeded in finding a job?" Sera blinked, looking surprised.

"Yup. I'm now a part-time worker for a mangaka." Minato nodded.

"I'm pleased to hear that, then," Sera congratulated him. Although Naegleria's debut left a lot to be desired for the vampire ninja, she was admittedly happy for Minato getting hired by the adult. It was wonderful that he wished to support his necromancer master and everyone else in the house further by earning money. She supposed this was an example of that "being a man" nonsense she heard about.

Minato tapped his palm with his fist, as if a light bulb lit up above his head.

"Oh yeah, I have a favor to ask, Sera. You see, I did get hired by Nene, but she's running out of time for her deadline tomorrow to finish her manga. I don't think with my help that we'll be done by then, so I was wondering if you could help us?"

"If that is all you are asking, then consider my assistance guaranteed." Sera responded with a smile. Assisting him wasn't a bother for her in the slightest.

"Thanks. I'll be sure to return the favor. How about I teach you another recipe tonight?" The bluenette rubbed the back of his head as he grinned.

"Hm, I accept the terms of this agreement. I look forward to it, Minato," the vampire ninja replied. It never hurt her to learn more ways to cook properly.

Minato then chose to prepare where the two would work as he gathered all the materials they needed. Pencils, pens, rulers, and more craft tools were placed by the coffee table. They didn't start immediately. Earlier, the boy had gone out to get Naegleria and

himself lunch, so right now it was lunchtime. The redheaded woman eventually got dressed properly and joined them for lunch and relaxation. Seraphim was welcomed to join, and she obliged but refrained from eating since she had her lunch earlier.

It was at this point in time that Seraphim started to space out. She couldn't get Nene's words out of her head.

"Unless of course, you two are an item?"

For as long as she knew Arisato Minato, the thought of viewing the male in that type of light never crossed her mind. She had always put her duties as a vampire ninja before her. She wasn't a second rank for nothing. There was never any time for her to dwell on nonsense such as romance. Not to mention there was that absurd custom among vampire ninjas when it came to stuff related to it. Love was a *very* serious topic to them.

Sera did have to admit, when she thought about it, her blue-haired housemate was indeed very handsome. He held an aura of charm on his person constantly, as if he was a main protagonist in a video game with a charm stat maxed out. He was also smart and resourceful. To top all that off, he was even a capable fighter. Naegleria was right, it was shocking no girl claimed him yet. And as far as she knew, Minato didn't seem to be too attached to any girl from his past in a romantic way whatsoever. Then again, she had her priorities as a vampire ninja, and the Persona-user had his as a member of SEES while he was alive last year, so it made sense to her that he couldn't squeeze in time for something like romance.

She unconsciously gazed at him while he and Naegleria were conversing with each other about manga as one thought came to her: he was perfect. Almost too perfect. The ponytailed girl never believed anything was absolutely perfect, but she struggled to find any apparent faults with him. The way he carried himself, his choice of words and actions. It was so natural to him. She had respected his status as the Messiah and his strength when they fought, and as time passed she saw more of what he was like. Needless to say, he was just a rather likable human who became a zombie.

If she had to choose someone to be romantically involved in, Minato

actually was the most ideal individual that came to mind.

But what was a mere vampire ninja grunt to humanity's savior?

'Even if I did have those sorts of feelings, it isn't possible for him to like me...' Seraphim contemplated. It would be the stuff of fairy tales and romance stories if such a thing were to happen. Or some cheesy anime. But this was reality for her.

The green-eyed female pushed those thoughts away to the farthest recesses of her inner world. Now was not the time for such frivolities. She was a vampire ninja, first and foremost.

Seraphim's daze didn't go unnoticed by a certain redheaded member of the Seventh Abyss as she slightly smirked.

Nighttime

Today was rather uneventful for Ayumu. He went to school, took notes, and daydreamed like for any other day. But it was typically after school where things arguably spiced up due to his housemates back at home. Sure, it had become a routine by this point, but he looked forward to returning to his house every day since experiences like his were fresh.

Ayumu gazed at the people with him as they were left to their own devices while in the living room. Haruna's cheerful, if not conceited, personality came into full effect when she wanted to do something, even if that something was mundane like figuring out a crossword puzzle, which she was doing at the moment. Seraphim's reserved nature along with her sharp tongue made conversations more entertaining due to her and Ayumu butting heads often. She and Minato had apparently decided to learn to cook together as the two were currently taste-testing a meal the latter had whipped up, which made Ayumu relieved because without any proper guidance the vampire ninja would've probably caused his house to melt someday. Minato seemed to be content as he helped Seraphim. The blue-

haired senpai was always reliable and nice. And Eucliwood was quietly engrossed with a show on TV. She was still so mysterious and eccentric since the day he met her.

Smiling to himself, Ayumu wished for days like this to continue. Twisted as it sounded, him dying may have been a blessing in disguise.

He was brought out of his musings when he noticed Eucliwood holding her notepad up to Minato.

[Congratulations on getting a job.] She wrote, wearing her everlasting poker face of course. Ayumu learned about Minato's new job when the bluenette and Seraphim returned home minutes after the gray-haired student came back from school.

"I should be thanking you for pointing me in the right direction, Eu," Minato replied, patting her head. "Wasn't sure what to expect, but Naegleria is pretty nice."

Eu nodded. [Hopefully she didn't cause you trouble.]

Seraphim huffed, her eyes closed as she sipped her tea. "For someone so shameless, I suppose she is alright."

"Uh, did something happen?" Ayumu tilted his head, legitimately puzzled. What was she talking about? She looked and sounded super annoyed.

"Just mind your own business, maggot. It's nothing," Sera answered bluntly, giving Ayumu a tiny glare.

"Sure doesn't seem like nothing..." The gray-haired zombie muttered to himself before moving on. He faced the other male in the room with a smile. "Anyway, congrats, Senpai! How about we go out to eat somewhere?"

Minato waved his hand, chuckling lightly. He didn't believe it was a big deal. "Guys, it's just a part-time gig. Nothing to celebrate about."

"Nuh-uh, no way!" Haruna intervened, shushing the older male with her finger. "Times like this call for 5-star restaurant cuisines and

then getting wasted when someone gets a job or promotion!"

"Haruna, you've been watching too much anime." Ayumu sweatdropped. He wasn't shocked, but jeez she was like a kid. "But in this case, Haruna's right. Don't sell yourself short like that, Senpai. We can do something fun for a change."

"For once I will agree with you, Ayumu," Seraphim added.

[Party!] Eu wanted to celebrate too apparently.

Minato let a faint smile grace his face, admitting defeat. "Well, it's 4 against 1, so I guess we can do something then."

"Sweet!" Haruna cheered, possibly the most psyched person here about celebrating. "Good timing too! Can we pick up something when we're out? Now what was it called again...? Toe fungus? Or was it toe jam? Wait, I think it was that last one."

Ayumu's face blanched while he eyed the brunette skeptically. "Toe jam? What kind of sicko would want toe jam?"

"You're one to talk, perv!" Haruna retorted. "My head teacher asked me to get it for her when I called her last time, so there! It's why I'm here in the first place."

He looked at Seraphim and Minato for their two cents on this, and they both shook their heads at him. No matter. He assumed Haruna was just being Haruna: a genius who didn't have a clue about Earth. She did mention this head teacher of hers before, however. Presumably, it was another person from Villiers. Sometimes she made phone calls to report miscellaneous things to her. Ayumu was curious actually if he would get charged for a phone call to an alternate world. How did that work exactly?

Any further talk of toe jam or whatever else was halted due to the doorbell being rung.

"I wonder who's here," Minato said aloud, raising an eyebrow. It was rather late for somebody to be out, notably due to recent events.

"I'll get it." Ayumu was the one to get up and walk to the door to see

who came to their house at this hour. It couldn't be Orito, because that guy would give Ayumu an advanced notice via text if he were coming.

When the gray-haired zombie opened his door, he couldn't help but squint his eyes.

"Greetings. I'm looking for an Aikawa Ayumu. My name is Kerberos Wansard."

It hadn't even been an hour since Ayumu came back home from school, but now he was face-to-face with a rather unusual entity at his front door when he went to answer it.

"I'm Ayumu. Wait, are you a Doberman?" The teenager asked the tall figure. Unless his eyes were playing tricks on him, he was speaking to a talking dog that was wearing a hat and a trench coat. Although, this wouldn't be the first time he encountered such a creature. Upon closer inspection, he was able to make out the same outfit Megalos would wear underneath the large trench coat. "No... you're a Megalo."

"Hmph, then let's cut to the chase," Kerberos said with a straight face, removing his hat and confirming Ayumu's assumptions. "I'm a guardian of the Underworld, but there's more to my title than just a name. I don't reject entry to those who come in, and I don't let those who leave go scot-free. You came to the Underworld at one point, and yet here you are, walking among the living. Do you see where this is going?"

"You're planning to drag me back to Hell, aren't you?" Ayumu smiled wryly as he attempted to brace himself. *'As if I'll let you.'*

Kerberos bared his teeth, displaying a grin. "Your understanding is most appreciated, Aikawa-san."

It was with a swift claw swipe that caught Ayumu off-guard as his arm got mauled deeply. Gritting his teeth through the pain, Ayumu managed to utilize his other arm to punch Kerberos in the nose, causing the dog Megalo to recoil in pain and back away to recover. Seeing an opening, the zombie used it to retreat to the living room

as fast as he could. He wasn't going to lose like this. And the injury wasn't too big of a concern, especially for a zombie like him that could regenerate.

Ayumu then tumbled into the room, falling to the floor while still clutching his arm. Fortunately, all of his housemates were in there before he had answered his door, and they had remained there too.

"Hey, what's wrong, Ayumu?!" Haruna asked hurriedly. She and Eucliwood went to Ayumu's side as Minato and Seraphim quickly stood up, shocked but now aware of a sudden threat.

Sparing a worried glance at Ayumu and then Eu, the latter of which nodded, Minato's gaze turned serious when he focused at the entryway into the living room.

"Stay on your guard, Sera." The vampire ninja also prepared herself, wielding an emerald shuriken with one hand. A couple of seconds later, Kerberos appeared at the door.

Right before anyone could make any sudden moves, Eu outstretched her hand to above Ayumu's wound. A ball of purple energy was conjured, and with each passing second, Ayumu's arm was mended until the injury he suffered was completely gone like it never happened. The teenager inspected it, and he felt no pain anymore. Eu then drank tea that was made earlier.

"Oh wow, that was quick," Haruna observed. Minato and Sera lowered their guard upon seeing Ayumu being healed.

"Yeah, that was super quick, Eu. Thank you," Ayumu praised the silver-haired girl while continuing to check his arm.

"Lady Hellscythe." Kerberos reminded the gang that he was still present, as they proceeded to redirect their attention towards him. "Lady Eucliwood Hellscythe. It's been a while. So this is where you've been spending your time."

All eyes were then on the necromancer. After casually sipping her tea a few more times, Eucliwood responded.

[Long time no see.]

"You've got one hell of a right hook, Aikawa-san. I'll give you props for that," Kerberos stated, now sitting with the members of the Aikawa household at their coffee table. Everyone had calmed down after Eucliwood healed Ayumu, no longer sensing any aggressive behavior from the Megalo in the room. It seemed that he wanted to talk civilly. "I presume this is your handiwork, Lady Hellscythe?"

[It slipped my mind.] The small necromancer answered with a nod and a note.

Sighing, Kerberos then said, "If you told me all this sooner, I wouldn't even be here right now. Also, Aikawa-san, do you know what it means that she healed your wounds?"

"Kind of." To be honest, Ayumu wasn't sure about what the Megalo meant by that. Eu simply healed him, right?

"In any case," Kerberos continued while focusing on Eu again, "you should be more careful in the future, Lady Hellscythe."

[I can handle it.] was what Eu wrote in response.

Unless they were overthinking it, the two zombies in the room felt something off when they observed Eu's writing. Handle what?

"I see. Well, now that that's out of the way, let me ask you something, blue kid." Kerberos chose to shift his attention onto Minato. "Like Aikawa-san here, your scent reeks of the undead. Not to mention you're giving me a rather odd vibe. What's your story? Did Lady Hellscythe revive you too?"

"It's complicated, but I am a zombie. Eucliwood revived me a few months ago," Minato responded smoothly. Recalling what he learned from his grandfather and cousin's line of work, he had a general idea about how to behave in interrogation-esque situations.

"Then how come you never entered the Underworld?" Kerberos was pressing him like an actual detective. "When someone kicks the bucket, they should go straight to there. But I've never seen nor sensed you in my life."

[This is Arisato Minato.] Eu wrote to the dog entity. The latter then appeared as if he had heard the wildest news ever because his eyes were bulging. [I forgot to mention that too. Sorry.]

"You brought back the Messiah too?!" Kerberos's jaw dropped. His calm composure from before vanished instantly. "I wasn't aware that this boy was him!"

"It's like someone told him he couldn't have his favorite treats anymore," Haruna noted out loud as she observed what was happening.

Taking a moment to clear his throat, Kerberos resumed sitting down before meeting eyes with Minato. "I apologize if I offended you in any way, Messiah."

"No worries, Kerberos." The bluenette shrugged, not bothered in the slightest. "I'm not the type to get offended easily."

"I see..." Releasing another sigh, the Megalo muttered under his breath, "To think you would resurrect him, Lady Hellscythe... ^{surely} you know the possible consequences of that."

Minato raised an eyebrow. He couldn't make out the rest of what Kerberos said just now. Neither did his friends. Eu just drank her tea peacefully.

"Anyhow, I believe I've overstayed my welcome long enough," Kerberos said as he stood up, donning his hat. "It was an honor to meet you, Messiah. Apologies for the misunderstandings."

"So the reason you came here initially was to take Ayumu back to the Underworld?" Seraphim asked him.

"Bingo, but it seems this was only a wild goose chase. He's Lady Hellscythe's property now. This trip wasn't a complete waste of time, though. A guy a couple of blocks over is about to croak. I think I might be able to return with a soul after all and secure a bone for my efforts."

"Hold on, someone's going to be killed?" Ayumu's eyes widened upon a thought entering his mind.

The serial killer that had been on the loose in Tokyo, the one who murdered Ayumu, was making their move again.

The night in Tokyo today was very windy, a stark contrast to the more peaceful nights in the past few weeks. Was this an omen? Whatever it was, it didn't matter to one gray-haired zombie as he ran and jumped across rooftops. Kerberos Wansard was heading towards the location of where someone was going to supposedly die soon, with Ayumu being led by the Megalo.

Once he recognized an opportunity presented itself to confront his murderer, Ayumu decided to accompany Kerberos without hesitation. While the help of his housemates might be useful, he didn't wish to drag them into what he thought was his business alone. He wanted them all to stay home until he returned. It was for their sake. Although, that was only part of the truth. He believed he couldn't rely on Minato or even Seraphim's strength to settle his issues forever. The teenager coveted to prove himself, and the best way to accomplish that was to take down this serial killer by himself. He was a zombie anyway, so he wouldn't go down without a fight.

After several minutes of parkouring, Kerberos paused at a rooftop, with Ayumu catching up to him.

"Gotta admit, I didn't see that coming," the Megalo said aloud.

"What?" Ayumu asked, walking up to stand next to him.

"Well, there's two things. First, Lady Hellscythe. I'm surprised she used her powers to mend your wound," Kerberos stated his first thought. "Don't you agree?"

There it was again. Was there something he wasn't aware about Eu's healing abilities?

"What do you mean?"

"Wait, are you saying you don't know what I'm referring to?" Ayumu shook his head. "Listen, kid... When she fixes injuries like yours, it's a double-edged sword. She acquired the pain you were

experiencing while you got healed up. In a nutshell, those abilities function as a give and take system."

The zombie was left dumbfounded upon hearing this. He had no idea that Eu's powers worked like that.

"That's horrible! Why did she decide to heal me?" He found himself questioning.

Kerberos gazed up at the sky.

"It's one of the many aspects that makes her special. She's an extraordinary person, without a doubt—at the center of everything... I'm no mind reader, but I'm willing to bet she wanted to heal you on her own volition. It leads me to conclude that Lady Hellscythe thinks you're special to her."

'Me, special? But I'm not...' Ayumu deliberated. To him, there was nothing remarkable about him. He was just a guy that got lucky with meeting a necromancer who then resurrected him. He wasn't special, not like his senpai anyway.

As if his thoughts became reality, Kerberos continued speaking.

"Now with the second thing, we've got the Messiah. Lady Hellscythe chose to revive him as well apparently. Same case may apply to him about him being important to her, but I don't know enough of the history between the two to make any proper judgments. I normally wouldn't give this stuff a second thought if he were a normal person. However, the circumstances of his death and revival is where things get ambiguous. I'm not sure what kind of effects can occur, because an event like that is unprecedented. Lady Hellscythe must know there are risks to be had that could potentially affect the Messiah and herself. And yet she went through with it anyway..."

Ayumu couldn't help but feel somewhat overwhelmed. He had a feeling Eu and Minato were unique in their own rights, but Kerberos's assertions made him ponder more about his two friends. Was there something going on with them like the Underworld Megalo implied? Eu in particular became a larger enigma, given her actions.

What does Eucliwood want? Why is she the way she is?

"Look after those two, Aikawa-san." Ayumu snapped out of his musings once his ears picked up Kerberos's voice, now perplexed if he heard him correctly. Before the teenager could say anything, the dog entity pointed towards an apartment down below them. "There we go. We just found the scene of the crime."

Remembering why he was here, the zombie took a deep breath before jumping to the ground with the Megalo. It was now or never.

Kerberos took the lead, entering the building first. The front door had been already breached, leading into a dark hallway. Ayumu followed closely behind him as they both carefully navigated the apartment, paying attention to their surroundings. They were anticipating bodies around a corner at this point. Perhaps even spot the perpetrator.

One glance into what looked to be the living room gave the two answers they were seeking in regards to this place's residents.

Blood had drenched the floor, walls and furniture. The corpses weren't able to have escaped the room. It appeared as if the people here didn't expect what was coming to them until it happened. Simply put, they were butchered and tortured.

"This is terrible..." Ayumu expressed his sympathies to the fallen while not taking his eyes off of the scene.

"Kibble is what they are now. The souls have gone AWOL to boot," Kerberos noted collectedly. "Lately, this sort of thing has been transpiring a lot in Tokyo. The deceased's souls haven't been reaching the Underworld either."

"They aren't? Where did they go then?" Ayumu asked him.

Tipping his hat, the Megalo considered the possibilities.

"Hard to tell. They may have gotten 'sacked.'"

"What do you mean 'sacked'?" The teenager raised an eyebrow.

"It's a short way of saying sacrificed, meaning the souls might have

been used as offerings," Kerberos answered. Ayumu didn't like where this train of thought was going. "Some say when souls of the dead are offered up for sacrifices, a tremendous amount of magical energy is granted."

"If we're going to assume that's the case, then... who's trying to get all that power?" Ayumu questioned. This was starting to become more complicated than he initially thought. He didn't think of the chances at the time, but the serial killer may be tied to supernatural forces.

"That, my friend, is the million yen question." The Megalo detective didn't know for sure, but he had one lead. "The only hint I've got so far is a name: the King of the Night."

"Do you who that is?" Ayumu thought it was an odd name, but he would take any clues that he could get.

"Come to think of it, word on the street is that—"

Before Kerberos could finish what he was saying, he and Ayumu were promptly interrupted by the sound of something screeching near them. It was as if hard, sharp metal was being dragged across the wall.

They broke out into a cold sweat, recognizing what was occurring.

With a slow turn of his head, Ayumu spotted a figure masked by the shadows of the apartment that was wielding a katana. It was the last he saw of that entity before Kerberos quickly moved in front of him.

"LOOK OUT!"

The next thing Ayumu knew, he felt an intense pain in his chest as he realized a sword was piercing both him and Kerberos. Despite the latter's attempt at protecting him, they both fell victim to their unknown assailant.

'No! I can't move my body! It's just like last time!' The gray-haired boy inwardly cried, recalling the moment he was killed. He couldn't get his body to respond whatsoever, and his new capabilities as a zombie weren't granting him anything either.

Kerberos fell forward once the attacker yanked their blade out of them. Their blood poured out of them like a geyser. Ayumu was sadly unable to completely see who this individual was as his body fell downward to the ground. His chance to find out who this murderer was had slipped through his grasp.

Incapable of moving, all Ayumu and Kerberos could do was wait for the mysterious entity to disappear, hoping they'd leave once they thought the two were dead. Within a few short moments, the enemy did in fact vanish without a trace.

"Aikawa...san," the dog Megalo muttered, sounding raspy. Ayumu weakly gathered enough strength to lift his head up to see Kerberos. "Lady Hellsythe... Protect her; be kind... No matter what happens, she musn't be made to mourn..."

Ayumu could only watch in sadness as Kerberos Wansard dispelled into motes of yellow light, just like what happened to Megalos when they die.

Midnight

When he found his energy finally, Ayumu forewent pursuing his assailant and opted to return home. There was nothing more he could do about that situation in his current state. The trek back felt like an eternity as several thoughts flooded his head from tonight's jaunt. Before he would call it a night, he knew what had to be done.

Upon entering the living room, he discovered only Eucliwood and Haruna there. The former was watching TV with the volume lowered down and the latter had apparently fallen asleep on the coffee table. Haruna was even sleep-talking.

[Welcome back, Ayumu.] The necromancer greeted him calmly, in spite of seeing her servant covered in blood and looking crestfallen.

"Where are Minato-senpai and Sera...?" He asked, not seeing his other two housemates.

[Minato received an urgent call from his boss and left to see her. Seraphim accompanied him.] Eu answered.

"I see..." Satisfied with her answer, he closed the door behind him and approached his master. "Eu, we need to talk."

Some moments later, the pair chose to take their conversation to the porch outside so they wouldn't disturb Haruna's slumber. The weather outside had also calmed down compared to how it was hours ago. Clear moonlit skies and warm temperatures returned as fast as it left. Ayumu wasted no time in relaying to Eu what ensued after he left the house while additionally addressing Kerberos's attempt to save him.

"I was surprised... He sacrificed himself to protect me, a zombie. He was a good guy through and through."

Not using her notepad to respond, Eu acknowledged his words with a light hum. Glancing at her arm, Ayumu was reminded of what she did for him prior to leaving.

"I'm sorry for my injury earlier. That must have hurt you a lot. I feel terrible."

[It's okay. I'm used to it.] She wrote to him.

Ayumu bit his lower lip. He felt a sense of guilt overcoming him from reading that.

"Eu, you have to be honest with me." The teenager decided to get straight to the point now as he looked directly at her. "Why do you wear a mask to hide your feelings?"

[Must I tell you?]

He nodded his head.

"Yes, please."

[Must I?]

"My answer won't change," Ayumu stated solemnly.

The silver-haired necromancer sat in silence for a while, possibly contemplating on how to proceed. It was after that when she started to write in her notepad. This time, she wrote more words on the pages than she normally would. The moment she finished, she tore out the notepad page and handed it to Ayumu so he could read her truth.

"The music for everyone's souls moves forward by fate, weaved together as a rhythm of infinite possibilities. But when the music has been influenced by magic, the rhythm becomes more fiercer and intense. My magic is haunted by chaos, dread, hate, despair, and all strong changes in mood. This obstructs the natural order and disturbs the music of fate, which alters reality. And thus, I am not allowed to display any emotions whatsoever."

Letting her written words sink in, Ayumu waited for Eu to write pages that continued her logic. Once she gave him those, he carried on reading aloud.

"I cannot talk for a reason. With every word I speak, there is magic intertwined in them. My words are like a burden: heavy. I am unable to control the magic in them nor foresee which words will be augmented. It is for these reasons that I can't be permitted to speak no matter what."

Ayumu felt his heart sank the more he registered what the necromancer was saying.

"When I verbally communicate, I feel an unforgiving pain shoot through my head. I hate it when that happens."

She couldn't even talk without experiencing a headache of that magnitude? How horrible.

"The power of eternal youth flows within my veins. And my heart radiates an enormous amount of magic that must be suppressed. My gauntlets and plate armor are meant to keep it under control. If I were to die, my powers would continue to exist because of how potent it is."

He was at a loss for words. Even if she were to die, her magic would

persist regardless. This girl that he was living with all this time had been suffering for who knows how long from her abilities. He truly pitied her. That was no way to live.

"I'm so sorry..." The zombie found his voice and attempted to console Eucliwood.

[You must hate me now. Minato will hate me too.] The starry skies above were still present, yet water dripped onto the notepad suddenly. The silver-haired girl began to shed tears, finally showing signs of emotion in front of Ayumu.

Ayumu immediately recognized her sadness and stood up as he let his heart and soul do the talking.

"No! Why would we?! Where would you get that idea?! We could never hate you!"

[My emotions affect you two the most. You've been living with a monster, Ayumu. My power is a curse I can't discard. Because of it, I can't forgive myself for what I did to Minato. Seeing his eyes is a sad reminder of it. You've been suffering because of me as well. Now that you know the truth, you must hate me.] Despite continuing to write what was on her mind, Eucliwood couldn't stop herself from crying.

"Don't be ridiculous, okay?! I don't see a monster! What I do see is a kind-hearted girl who brought me back to life!" Ayumu exclaimed emotionally. "And if I know Minato-senpai as well as you do, he would never think of you as a monster! No matter what you did to him!"

Through her sniffles, Eu was able to write another note to Ayumu.

[Can I stay with you? Will everything be okay?]

The servant had an idea. He took the necromancer's notepad and wrote in it himself, tearing out his page and then showing it to Eu.

[Don't go anywhere. Stay with me. Everything will be just fine.]

It was with those words Eu's eyes widened and she allowed herself

to stop holding in all her tears.

"Eucliwood, it's alright to feel what you want to feel no matter what," Ayumu reassured her as he patted her head. "As far as I'm concerned, fate won't stop me."

The next moment, the teenager's chest was used by the necromancer to absorb her tears. He gently embraced her, letting her release all her emotions for as long as she needed to.

Ayumu's resolve had been reinforced substantially. Being with Eucliwood Hellsythe was his number one priority. He would protect her until the end of his days, and because he was a zombie he didn't have to worry about that time ever arriving. She meant so much to the gray-haired teenager.

'We've still got a long road ahead of us. I don't care if I have to fight Megalos, killers, or whatever else is out there. I'll take them all on. If that's the price of having Eu with me, it's one I'm willing to pay. I'll be waiting right here.'

Although his confidence was stronger than ever, one issue still remained a mystery to him as he tried to think on it.

What exactly happened between Eucliwood and Minato?

"My, my. Such a touching scene that makes me yearn to root for them. This is only but the second act of your story, Eucliwood Hellsythe. What will the future have in store for you and your companions, I wonder? Your fate is in the cards. Until next time, I wish you good luck."

A figure sat atop a house's roof a short distance away from the Aikawa household, eating a cup of pudding until opting to leap to the ground. Walking down the street under the streetlight lamps and to the next destination, the individual began to sing a song.

"Veeelvet, oh velvet... My maaaster has a laaarge nose..."

Meanwhile, in another area of Tokyo.

"You two came at the right tiime! I was waiting to get this party started! Woohoo!" Naegleria yelled joyfully as she spun around on her desk chair.

Minato and Seraphim were not expecting this, to say the least. She had called earlier, telling them about an "urgent" matter, but she never specified what it was in particular. They went to her apartment and had just arrived, only to find the redheaded Underworlder completely wasted from alcohol, if the large bottle of champagne in her hand was any indication.

"Nene, I thought you needed us for something important," the bluenette replied, repressing his urge to sigh. Seraphim didn't seem amused either as she crossed her arms with narrowed eyes.

"This IS important, Mina-kun~!" Naegleria got out of her seat and clumsily stumbled over to where the pair were standing in her apartment. The two could clearly see her face flushed red from the booze. "It's because of you and your lady friend that I was able to finish everything for my deadline a day in advance! That's why I called you two over. It's so that we can celebrate tonight! Hiring you is one of the best decisions I eeever made!"

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Empress Arcana..."

"It's rather late for festivities, in my opinion," Seraphim argued calmly. She wasn't a fan of drinking to be honest, nor did she have any interest. "I must respectfully decline your offer, Nebiros-san."

"I also can't drink. I'm underage," Minato added. He was still technically 17 years old. If he were to consume alcohol, he would have to be 20. Not that he had plans to do so anyway.

"Aw, don't be a spoilsport! One, it's never too late for fun! And two, you're a zombie, kid. Who would care?" Nene argued, waving her free hand dismissively.

"We could've celebrated together if you waited. My friends and I

wanted to go out somewhere. Preferably during daytime," Minato stated truthfully. She probably wouldn't be able to join them now though, given how intoxicated Nene was at the moment. The woman was going to have one hell of a hangover in the morning.

"Is that so?" Nene tilted her head, looking unamused as she swayed from side to side. She then brought her face so close to Minato's that it was practically an invasion of personal space. He didn't flinch but was starting to feel uncomfortable and Seraphim's eyebrow twitched in irritation. Nene's mood changed from zero to one hundred rapidly as she smiled and patted the blue-haired teenager's shoulder. "Oh well! Who am I to ruin you kids' fun if you've made plans already? Don't worry about me! I know a good drinking buddy that I can celebrate with, so you two can go home now!"

Minato was admittedly taken aback by his boss's sudden shifts in mood but chalked it up to the alcohol working its magic. He believed he was going to stay here for a while longer, but now he was free to go. It was fortunate, because he was feeling exhausted.

"Okay then. Sera and I will be going home, Nene. Have yourself a good night," Minato pleasantly said to her as he went to the exit and waited there for his female housemate to join him. Sera nodded her head to Naegleria and then followed suit. Minato turned to Sera while he held the door. "Want to get anything on the way back?"

"There is nothing I need for now, Minato. Let's be off," the vampire ninja said with a smile.

Naegleria was leaning against the wall as she savored the taste of her champagne, her face displaying a puzzled expression. For some reason she felt like she was forgetting something. The alcohol certainly didn't make things easier for her to remember sadly. A few seconds later, realization dawned on her as she suddenly ran to her door. Minato and Seraphim were still there luckily.

"Wait, Minato! I forgot to tell you that you don't have to come to work tomorrow— Oof!" As she tried to relay her message to her worker, she accidentally tripped from her foot slipping off of her rug. She swiftly fell down and bumped into Seraphim while the latter had her back turned. The vampire ninja, not anticipating this collision, found

herself pushed into an unsuspecting Minato, and both of them also fell down to the ground.

The next thing Minato knew, Seraphim was on top of him and had her lips locked with his.

'This is... definitely not what I expected my first kiss to be like,' Minato internally thought. He didn't know how to properly react. He was so stunned that he couldn't move, not that he'd be able to anyway with a girl on top of him.

Seraphim was even more so shocked by this turn of events as her eyes were widened. Her first kiss was with Arisato Minato, the Messiah. A flurry of thoughts overloaded her senses, but one was able to make itself known to her. She had to face the truth.

Vampire ninja laws were absolute. Without a shadow of a doubt, Seraphim had just become Minato's wife through a single kiss.

Next: Chapter 6: Till Death Do Us Part

Social Links:

Fool: Rank 6

Empress (Naegleria Nebiros): Rank 2

Chariot (Haruna): Rank 4

Fortune (Seraphim): Rank 6

Death (Eucliwood Hellscythe): Rank 5

Temperance (Aikawa Ayumu): Rank 5

A/N: I lived, bitch. Well actually, I did die but then a necromancer came along and brought me back to life. Interesting twist of fate, is it

not?

First things first, I now go by the name Annitsua. Hopefully, this is the last time I'll change usernames!

Now that I've said that, let's get some stuff out of the way. I am sorry about the unannounced three-year hiatus. It wasn't my intention to stop writing for so long. Stuff in my life just kept happening. Not to mention my early drafts of this chapter were not fun to write. It was only recently that I found the spark to write for this fanfic again, and I enjoyed writing this chapter as well. I might be a bit rusty, but hopefully I made a good attempt for myself and for you all.

As far as updates go, let me just say that I never lost my passion for A Necromancer's Wild Card despite my hiatus. I always had it in the back of mind, imagining what to incorporate. If I found myself unable to continue this story due to priorities or loss of interest, I would've already passed this on to someone else. I still want to write because I'm legitimately attached to this project, and I value every single one of you who expressed interest in this story. I would like to say the next chapter's coming soon, but who knows what may happen? Not sure when I'll put out chapter 6, however I will do my best. My motto is quality over quantity, after all.

Anyway, how did you all like this chapter? It may not exactly be what you guys wanted, but I do believe the payoff will be good after this setup. Some of you were afraid I would take away what made Ayumu important, but I want to be clear that I love Ayumu as a character and wouldn't do that to him. It's a little tough because Minato is technically the main protagonist, but that won't mean I will overlook our favorite Magical Garment Girl zombie. Also, I opted to introduce Naegleria this early as opposed to her debut in canon. Now she's got Minato working as her assistant.

And I know a *lot* of you were waiting for it, but now it's happened: Minato has Seraphim for a vampire ninja wife. Yes, she is who I've chosen to pair Minato with for this fanfic. How well will this relationship turn out? We'll find out eventually~

It's been such a long while that I feel responding to older reviews at this point is moot. I do encourage leaving reviews still about your

thoughts. You guys can also send me messages if you so wish regarding questions about the story and whatnot.

Until next time, sayonara!

Till Death Do Us Part

Chapter 6: Till Death Do Us Part

"Is dying that scary to you?"

"You seek him, do you not?"

She had been to this area plenty of times beforehand, but hardly a soul had wandered by or approached her. That was the case until now. Turning around, her gaze fell upon an unknown individual.

Not sensing hostility while also not dropping her guard, she merely responded with a nod.

"Then you and I share similar intents."

Curious, she thought to herself. She wasn't sure where this conversation was heading but continued to indulge the stranger.

Said stranger lightly smiled.

"If you would allow me, you may find what I have to say intriguing concerning our mutual friend."

Morning

Bright sunlight shined down onto Shirogane Naoto as she exited one of the many train stations in Tokyo and stopped herself from entering the commuting crowd. This wasn't her first time coming to the city, as she had been here on a few occasions before due to her line of work. She could tell the air was different this time, and not just

because it was summer even though it was notably hot this year. Call it a detective's intuition.

"Fascinating," a voice said right next to her. "This is my first time visiting the capital of Japan. It is truly a sight to behold."

Naoto smiled. "It certainly is. I imagine it's quite a visual change from Iwatodai, Aigis-san."

Accompanying the pint-sized detective was a member of the Kirijo Group: Aigis. If she had a last name, Naoto wouldn't know as she only heard the blonde girl go by Aigis. She appeared to be of foreigner descent from what she could analyze, but her Japanese was stellar. Rather formal as well.

"Indeed. While both cities are modern, Tokyo appears to be a cut above the rest. I shall have to observe the other cities and wards for further analysis while we are stationed here," Aigis remarked.

Both Naoto and Aigis were sent to Tokyo by Mitsuru to pick up the trail Minato left behind if he did indeed come to the capital, with the latter acting as Naoto's partner for the case. Naoto didn't personally mind receiving help from the Kirijo Group, not to mention the funding they received including a hotel that would act as the pair's main base of operations until further notice.

The detective prince would have to ask Minato about his relations with the Kirijo Group later if she were to locate him. This all seemed a bit much for somebody who was supposed to be dead and went missing. Something was clearly fishy, but she didn't have enough information to create solid ideas other than Minato and Mitsuru having some sort of relationship, romantic or not. Aigis appeared to know their target too when they first met but wouldn't divulge anything further.

Just what was her cousin up to last year when he moved to Tatsumi Port Island?

"We should probably check into our hotel now that we've arrived, Aigis-san," Naoto said. "There is a lot of ground to cover once we begin our search."

"Agreed. I look forward to our partnership, Shirogane-san." Aigis nodded in response and extended her hand.

"Likewise." Naoto shook her hand with a smile. "By the way, aren't you... hot in that attire?"

Aigis looked downward, examining the black jacket and pants she was wearing. The red ribbon she wore before was now replaced by a red tie, making her look very professional.

"Ah, if you are worried that I will overheat due to the weather, then worry not! I shall be fine. I personally enjoy this style of clothing as well," Aigis reassured.

"Hm, I see," the detective noted. She can admit the blonde looked good in her outfit. "Well then, let's be off."

Minato's eyes fluttered open as he awoke. It seemed to be a new day with how much sunlight was peering in through his bedroom window. Yet another sunny day, eh? This year's summer was quite brutal. Might be just him, but it also felt like it was dragging on. Then again, so much stuff had occurred since April.

He tried getting up from his bed in order to stretch but found himself unable to for some reason. One of his arms felt heavy and warm. Perplexed, he adjusted his view.

"Oh. Right," he softly said, realizing what was going on.

What greeted him was a certain vampire ninja slumbering peacefully next to him in his bed. Her arms appeared to be the culprits as they were wrapped around the one arm he couldn't move.

As he closed his eyes to focus, he began to remember what occurred last night.

Flashback

Minato and Seraphim were on their way back to the Aikawa residence as they walked through Tokyo's suburban streets after leaving Naegleria Nebiros's home since their business was finished for the night. The evening was rather tranquil. A little too tranquil perhaps for the pair, however.

They've walked together in silence for a good portion of the trek back. Minato was a normally quiet person himself, but even he knew this was getting awkward. Having an accidental kiss with the vampire ninja would do that.

Seraphim didn't appear to be upset with him. He honestly thought he would've received a slap to the face or something similar after that kiss, knowing it wasn't his fault or hers, yet nothing of the sort happened. Naegleria falling onto Seraphim was something he wasn't sure if it was deliberate or not, given the underworlder's track record of clumsiness. Either way, it didn't matter because the kiss was something that couldn't be taken back.

Nothing seemed to be different for the blue-haired zombie's Social Link with the ninja also, which he supposed was a good sign. At the moment, though, he still couldn't tell what was on her mind. Having experiences from his previous Social Links gave him a faint idea about what to do and not do in social scenarios, so he chose to keep quiet until an opportunity presented itself.

The only thing he did notice was that Sera had been walking next to him fairly close, despite the quietness and not making eye contact. Sometimes it even looked as if she was attempting to hold his hand but kept hesitating.

It wasn't until they reached a nearby park when the silence was broken finally.

"May we... talk for a moment, Minato?" Seraphim spoke up. She pointed to a bench in the park that was next to an active lamp.

"Mm." With a nod, Minato followed her to sit down at the bench of her choosing. The two took in the nightly ambiance briefly, which helped them relax a tad. The zombie was beginning to have an odd

feeling about this whole situation, like there was something he didn't understand yet. Sera's out of character behavior didn't help matters. He waited for her to make the first move.

Within a few moments, the swordswoman appeared calm and spoke.

"Please listen carefully," she said, resuming a serious face that he knew. "We vampire ninjas have our own set of rules to uphold that may differ from what you humans are used to, so allow me to get right to the point. Although you may not have kissed me of your own volition and vice versa, a kiss symbolizes a cherished bond among my people."

Sera took a deep breath before finishing her explanation.

"Therefore because of Naegleria's foolishness earlier, you and I... are married now."

There was a pause after that, one that felt like a long time to the duo. It would've been very quiet had it not been for the nocturnal insects' sounds that reverberated through the air.

Marriage, huh? That idea was something he actually didn't consider for himself. With how much of roller coaster ride his life had been, romance was one of the furthest things away from his conscious mind. Knowing the type of person Seraphim is, he realized she wasn't yanking his chain.

It was no surprise to Seraphim when she saw his face contort with confusion and shock.

"What?" He uttered. "But we didn't mean to kiss each other."

"The method of when or how it transpires does not matter for vampire ninjas," she clarified before sighing. "That damn harpy. She is beginning to be more of a headache than Ayumu, but I digress."

"You're just going to accept this?" Minato asked incredulously. Did he not have a say in the matter? "What about your own feelings? And mine?"

"Forgive me, but this has been the norm among vampire ninjas for centuries. I cannot ignore what I have known for all my life. Not even you can change this outcome, Minato," the vampire ninja countered sternly. "It is simply the way things are."

Minato was perplexed by how Sera was adapting to this but could tell she had her reservations. She was always one of those kinds of people who placed rules over their own feelings. Quite fitting for her as a Social Link of the Fortune Arcana when he thought about it.

For the Persona-user, he was still attempting to accept this sudden turn of events. Everything happened so fast for him. He needed time to process it all.

"Me as a husband... Are you okay with that, Sera?" He wondered. Setting aside his potential as a husband for now, he wanted to know more about Sera's personal opinions before he could think about what he personally wanted.

"There is nothing we can do now but accept the fact that we are husband and wife by my people's traditions, Minato." A light blush appeared on the ninja's cheeks as she averted her eyes somewhat. "However... I will admit that there is a sense of relief from you being my husband. It would be rather difficult to become intimate with anybody that I dislike had they have been in your stead. Since I am properly married to you now, I do not have to worry about a maggot entrapping me into an eternal pact."

"I thought you'd say something like that. I guess in a way that's good for you," Minato responded with a light laugh, slightly flattered from the roundabout compliment. "Anyway, thanks for telling me all this."

"You were more understanding about this than I gave you credit for, Minato," Sera noted. "Does this mean you've come to accept us as a married couple?"

And there was the big question and his decisive moment. Although he was caught off guard initially by the news, Minato was able to remain mostly calm. There was so much pressure that would make most men collapse into nervous wrecks.

What did he want?

It *really* did not seem ethical, but apparently vampire ninjas did not care about the issues it could cause.

The boy legitimately had not thought about the idea of him being married before, let alone getting hitched at his age. He couldn't wave this off either. There was literally no choice by vampire ninja standards, feelings be damned. It was super surreal, like something out of a cheesy romance anime. Yet it was real — his reality. Whatever happened to simply being a necromancer's servant?

He personally wasn't offended by having Seraphim for a wife. Seraphim had the makings of an ideal partner based on his preferences, from personality to appearances. At least she was someone he was familiar with, and not a person he met in a crash-into-hello fashion.

Based on their relationship before this kiss, he thought they could mesh well together. The blue-haired zombie never really contemplated love, especially during his SEES adventures.

Maybe over time, however, he could entertain the thought. He had the freedom and time to do whatever his heart desired.

As of right now, he couldn't readily see Seraphim in that light yet. He hadn't quite developed romantic feelings for her, though he did indeed like her as a person. Taking things one step at a time seemed like the best route.

If he thought of this like dating, then he could see it working out.

Yeah, he didn't mind the sound of that. He could at least do that much for her.

"I'd rather not rush into things like this," Minato admitted coolly. "But that's not to say I won't deny you being my wife. I also won't deny being your husband. I just need time to let this all sink in. I'm sure you feel the same way." He then smiled. "Who knows, I may end up actually falling in love with you someday."

Sera let herself smile. She could see what he meant; she wasn't

wholly certain about her own feelings yet either. Her way of life had always been by the sword and vampire ninja customs, which placed duty above personal feelings. Becoming married through her people's standards meant falling in love with her significant other if the love wasn't fully there before. This meant making Minato fall for her while she would have to fall for him from now on. Thinking about her new lifestyle made her feel tired already. However, things could've been much worse so she felt some comfort from her current status.

Luckily for her, she had already grown fond of the Messiah prior to tonight's events.

"Duly noted. It seems we are on similar grounds then," Sera replied. "Not to worry, I promise to be the kind of woman you desire in the days to come."

Minato gave a friendly smirk in acknowledgement as he stood up from the bench they were sitting on and looked at Seraphim. The boy's head was directly in front of a nearly full moon that was out in the sky tonight. Seraphim couldn't help but notice how his appearance was complimented by the moonlight. From his azure hair to his eyes. Those golden eyes of his seemed... different somehow. She couldn't quite put her finger on it.

"Shall we?" He asked her, outstretching his hand. Dismissing her earlier thought, she in turn grasped it as the pair then made their way home.

"Let's."

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou chooseth to create a Persona of the Fortune Arcana..."

"By the way, have you ever thought about actually marrying someone until now?" Minato questioned his new wife while they walked.

"Truth be told, it was something that was typically not in the forefront of my mind. Regardless, there were never any potential mates whom I deemed worthy," Seraphim admitted.

The zombie felt his lips curling upwards in amusement.

"Do I meet your expectations?"

Sera found herself to be amused too.

"I've yet to be disappointed."

Flashback End

Minato sighed lightly before looking up at the ceiling and running his fingers through his blue hair.

"Guess that wasn't a dream at all."

He didn't take into account the possibility of him and Sera sharing a room now. Very bold of her to take that step already.

And thus today marked the start of a new kind of journey for this Wild Card.

Eucliwood let out a small yawn as she stretched her body, waking up from her slumber. Pondering to herself, she realized she had been having strange dreams lately. If she were more emotionally expressive on the outside, she might have frowned. But given recent events, she couldn't blame her psyche doing this to her as she dreamed.

Her talk with Ayumu last night got her thinking. She knew the world had diverged too much already from its supposed history. When blessed with powers like hers, it was simple.

While the necromancer possessed abilities that can alter reality as little or as much as she desired, even she would not dare to do it excessively. Despite her appearance to normal people, she had many mortal lifespans of experiences under her belt that molded her

into the person she was today. She was aware to not tamper with the string of destiny out of convenience.

Her gut feeling told her that Minato was fated to die the way he did and for all intents and purposes should have remained as the Great Seal, shielding humanity from Erebus and Nyx making contact.

She didn't like the sound of that, obviously. Although she completely understood his intentions, she thought it was still too cruel for a teenage boy who hadn't even graduated high school to endure.

Was it selfish of her to tamper with his fate? Of course. She also believed it was selfish. The same held true for her resurrection of Ayumu. She felt frustrated with the cards the two boys were dealt.

She was adamant that she had made good choices, but what the new future held was out of reach even for somebody of her caliber. Ayumu being revived was a relatively simpler subject when compared to Minato, however.

There were some... particular circumstances concerning the Persona-user's revival that have yet to be divulged.

She remembered having an emotional meltdown last night while being comforted by Ayumu, showing the first signs of emotion to the boy or anybody for as long as she stayed in her new home. Once she calmed down, a wave of exhaustion enveloped her and the next thing she could recall was Ayumu assisting her to her bedroom via piggyback riding. The moment after was a quick trip to dream land.

For the first time in a while, the necromancer could actually say she had a good night's sleep.

She still slightly had her reservations about opening up to the others in fear of being a burden, but after receiving Ayumu's reassurance, she could take it slowly. Deep in her heart, she knew he was right.

With that newfound resolve in mind, she started today by resuming her daily routine, which meant meeting with everybody in the living room for breakfast and then she could go from there. She hoped she could work up the courage to be more open with everybody in the

days to come.

After all, despite their clashing personalities, she considered her housemates to be her friends.

"WHAT THE HELL? YOU TWO ARE MARRIED NOW?!" Ayumu screeched as he slammed his hands down onto the coffee table. Haruna had just spit out her breakfast at the same time.

Eu was used to her friends' antics, especially in the morning, but this new revelation surprised even her.

Sitting at the table with the three of them were Minato and Seraphim, the latter having her arm wrapped around Minato's. The blue-haired boy was laughing nervously in addition to smiling awkwardly while the girl beside him displayed her typical look of resoluteness.

Minato sure wasn't ready for what today had to offer him to say the least.

Ayumu slapped himself in the face and shook his head to recover from his stupor.

"So let me get this straight," he began addressing the apparent couple. "You both plus a kiss equals tying the knot? In what world does that make sense?"

"This one, maggot," Sera bluntly replied. "Although it was not desired by us, a kiss signifies a sacred bond among vampire ninjas. And because Minato and I shared one last night, we are officially married."

Haruna scratched her head in confusion.

"I don't get it. I do get that's some vampire ninja law and stuff, but you guys said it was an accident. That still counts?"

"Mhm," Minato answered. "Apparently it doesn't matter when or how it happens, according to Sera. A kiss between two of the opposite

sex means marriage for vampire ninjas."

Ayumu was utterly floored from the news. Because he knew what they were both like, that could only mean they were telling the truth.

"That's *some* law, holy crap. And you two are fine with that? This is marriage we're talking about here — a lifelong commitment."

Minato could understand where Ayumu was coming from. On top of coming back from the dead as a zombie, becoming a servant to a necromancer, making his way to Tokyo, meeting everyone here and discovering new existences he was bound to Seraphim by her people's rules. Things just kept getting weirder and weirder for him in his undead life.

"Well... it's not something we can really fight with. Trust me, I tried," the bluenette stated with a sigh. He asked Sera last night during their walk home if there were any ways to undo the marriage, but this specific law had been in place for as long as the latter can remember. Why exactly? Even she didn't know. That had been something vampire ninjas grew to accept.

"There is no way to separate a marriage involving vampire ninjas even if till death do us part," Seraphim added. "Like I've been saying, the journey that can occur leading up to kissing a vampire ninja doesn't matter. We place the law above our own feelings."

[That's been the vampire ninjas' way for a long time.] Eucliwood said to the group. She then started to write to Minato and Sera in particular. [Even though you both weren't anticipating it and now that it has happened, what now?]

Sera felt as if her piece had been said already but chose to elaborate more, "I've already pledged my love to Minato and to him alone. Whether or not he chooses to reciprocate will not change the fact that I am forever his wife. I shall stay by his side and perform my wifely duties to the best of my capabilities while balancing my vampire ninja ones as well. It is the fate I must accept from now on."

Ayumu was impressed by the ninja's resolve, in spite of her awkward situation. Eu nodded her head in agreement.

Minato rubbed the back of his neck. He then said, "I won't resist if Sera really wants this. Nothing is changing her mind. I mean, yeah I'm still trying to come to grips that I'm technically a married man now. I'm willing to give this a shot, though. Give it time, and who knows? We might turn out to be a pretty good couple."

He recalled bits of what Mitsuru mentioned in the past about her father's marriage with her mother, because his situation was reminding him of theirs. It was arranged, and the two didn't immediately fall in love with each other. But given Mitsuru's upbringing by Kirijo Takeharu and her mother, he assumed the marriage turned out well enough.

Officially, he and Sera were married. But he believed mutual love for each other is what makes a relationship, especially marriage, succeed. How long would that take? Only time would tell. And both him and Sera had lots of it.

"Wow, that's awfully mature, Senpai," Ayumu whistled in awe. "Then again, this is you we're talking about. I think that's the best course of action for now." He crossed his arms and closed his eyes. "You've got bigger guts than me. I don't even want to imagine what it'd be like if I were in your position, honestly."

"That's assuming a vampire ninja or any girl would even give you the satisfaction," Sera remarked with narrowed eyes. Ayumu could feel an imaginary giant arrow poking his chest from the insult as he keeled over.

[Congratulations on the marriage, Minato and Seraphim. (´ ▽ `)/] Eu lauded. She even drew an emoticon on her notepad. While she didn't foresee this happening, she was admittedly happy for the pair and thought they could be a good match in time.

Haruna, who had been relatively quiet for the past few minutes, decided to chime in.

"Does this mean we'll see you two act all lovey-dovey and crap around the house?"

Ayumu facepalmed while the newlyweds sighed.

"Way to kill the mood, Haruna," Ayumu stated.

"Hey, I'm just saying! It was an honest question!" The brunette retorted. The two then started to go back and forth as they would normally do on a regular basis. Minato, Eucliwood, and Seraphim resumed eating their breakfast while they fought.

Some things never change.

Afternoon

"Report, Seraphim," a stern, feminine voice said.

High in the sky in an area of Tokyo were two individuals standing on top of telephone tower wires with ease. One was Seraphim, and the other was a girl that had long black hair and fierce red eyes whose backed was turned away from the former with her arms crossed.

"Lady Eucliwood Hellscythe has not changed her mind about the village elder. Also, Megalo appearances have remained to be relatively small, but the number steadily rises as time moves forward. I'm still not sure what could be the cause, Sarasvati," Seraphim stated.

"Interesting..." The girl whose name was Sarasvati pursed her lips, not turning around to make eye contact with Sera. She happened to be Seraphim's senpai in the vampire ninja clan they were both a part of. On occasion while Sera went about her duties, she would report back to Sarasvati for updates or new missions. "What could the sudden increase in numbers mean...?"

"Should I continue keeping myself within Lady Hellscythe and the Messiah's presence, Saras?" Sera calmly asked.

"Yes. I will summon you again if anything on my end or yours changes. If you have anything else to disclose, do so now. I have a concert to get ready for," Sarasvati bluntly declared.

Sera rolled her eyes. She didn't agree with how her senpai behaved among humans. For reasons she couldn't understand, the older vampire ninja was actively a part of human society by becoming a student and idol with the pseudonym Hoshikawa Kirara. She personally thought it conflicted with vampire ninja traditions, but she supposed her senpai was free to do whatever.

"There is one thing," Sera confirmed. Her cheeks flushed with a light shade of pink, but she then cleared her throat. She may as well get it over with. "I'm married now. To Arisato Minato."

A lone gust of wind echoed through the air, causing the two girls' hair to sway.

"...I beg your pardon?" The vampire ninja senpai whipped around with an arched eyebrow.

"I see. So that's what happened," said Minato as he leaned over Ayumu's balcony with his kouhai. He had just been filled in on Ayumu's side of the events that ensued last night while he was preoccupied with his own business. It irked him when he learned about the serial killer's active presence again, especially knowing that neither Ayumu or Kerberos could do anything against them even with their supernatural abilities.

Ayumu, for obvious reasons, didn't mention anything related to his conversation with Eu. She had to be the one to confess to the Persona-using zombie.

"You thinking what I'm thinking?" Ayumu asked.

"That we should stop the serial killer ASAP?" Minato answered the teen's question with another question.

"Exactly," Ayumu smirked. He looked downward and clenched his fist. "In order to do that, I need to be prepared to face them again. No way in hell am I going down three times in a row. I can't do this alone, Minato. I need your help."

"You already know my answer. I've got your back," the bluenette responded, turning his head towards Ayumu. "But don't be afraid to ask the girls too. We're all in this together, aren't we?"

"Heh thanks, Senpai. And I guess you're right. It's kinda hard to remember that sometimes, considering how they are," Ayumu snorted. It certainly was an interesting group dynamic they had.

Minato chuckled a little. "Quiet as she may be, Eucliwood means well. Seraphim and Haruna are rough around the edges, but they're good people. Although I probably shouldn't talk about Sera like that considering that she and I are married now."

"Right, that's certainly going to be not awkward," Ayumu joked. "So are you two going to be sharing the same room now or what?"

"Considering how I woke up to her sleeping next to me in my bed today, I'd say that's a guarantee," Minato admitted casually. It would take a bit to get used to that. "She already finished moving all of her stuff into my room."

"What the heck?" The surprise was evident by Ayumu's facial expression. "I know Sera is a pretty dedicated person, but damn she moves fast. Probably comes with the territory of being a vampire ninja."

"Mm, but that's what makes her, well, her," Minato stated. "Enough about me and her, though. There was something else you wanted to talk about?"

"Yeah." Ayumu looked serious. Minato noticed how the teenager suddenly seemed tense. After a moment, his kouhai took a deep breath and stared directly at Minato. "Do you think I could have a Persona?"

Now that was something Minato didn't expect to hear at all.

"I... don't know. Back when I was in SEES, it was usually Mitsuru and Akihiko who learned about others having the potential. That was also when the Dark Hour was still active, which made it easier to tell who had it or not," Minato explained. He really didn't know too much

about this topic. Ayumu didn't seem to remember anything related to the Dark Hour in the past year, otherwise he likely would've brought it up by now. If he did, Minato would be more confident in Ayumu having the potential.

"It can't hurt to give it a shot," Ayumu countered and shrugged his shoulders.

The younger zombie had a point. Minato doubted there would be any side effects should Ayumu actually shoot himself since no one from SEES mentioned anything of the sort. He took his Evoker out of his pocket and handed it to Ayumu without much hesitation.

Ayumu studied the gun in his hands. He knew it didn't contain any real bullets. It was simply a tool to help Persona-users unleash their Personas in his eyes. Besides, he was a zombie! He already died and withstood many other life-threatening attacks these last few months. What was the worse that could happen?

"Just gotta point it to my head like you do, right?" Ayumu asked for clarification, receiving a nod from his senpai. He then mimicked Minato's normal pose for when the bluenette would summon his Personas, placing the gun barrel at his head's temple and closing his eyes.

He took another deep breath. Once his finger touched the trigger, body nerves suddenly felt tight within him. His heart kept racing. Sweat began to form on his brow. His hand was trembling. Why was this so difficult for him? He was dead already. What was stopping him from firing?

Images of getting assaulted by the serial killer overwhelmed his mind. He could remember the fear he felt in his final moments and last night.

Seeing how apprehensive Ayumu became, Minato thought it was best to take back his Evoker gently. He removed it from Ayumu's hand slowly as the gray-haired teen started to calm down.

"Man, I'm such a wuss," Ayumu groaned, frustrated by his ineptitude.

"If it makes you feel better, Yukari had the same problem at first. And she knew she had the potential," Minato assured. It was normal for people to have that irrational fear of suicide when placed in scenarios such as this one. Even though Ayumu had a taste of death before and became a zombie, it appeared he was still hung up on the thought of dying. "We can try again another day."

Letting out a large sigh, Ayumu's mood seemed to perk up as he managed to smile. "I'll hold you to that, Senpai. Maybe if I hear more about you and your friends' experiences, I can pull the trigger."

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Temperance Arcana..."

"We'll see." Minato patted Ayumu on the back.

"I still want to get better," Ayumu said, not satisfied with his current self. "If only there was something I can do that could help me while being true to myself."

Impressed by his determination, Minato decided to help him out. The Persona-user knew he wouldn't be always around Ayumu, so if he somehow wasn't available to take on a new threat, then he wanted his kouhai to handle things.

Minato was without a doubt powerful, but having to be relied on always wasn't exactly productive.

"For now, let's focus on what you can improve to fight better with your already existing arsenal. Choosing to use Mystletainn or not to become a Magical Garment Girl, learning new ways to fight Megalos or the serial killer can take you far."

Ayumu nodded his head in agreement. "What do you think I should try learning, Minato-senpai?"

The blue-haired zombie contemplated carefully. What could Ayumu do to make himself more efficient in battles?

There was boxing, but Minato wasn't an expert in that field. Akihiko taught him a little to hold his own in a fight. Minato didn't think that combat style would suit Ayumu, so he pondered more, reaching far

into his memories of the younger teenager.

Strangely enough, memories of Ayumu breakdancing came to mind. Nah, that was silly. He was adept for sure, but there was no way to use that in...

Wait, it may just be crazy enough to work.

"Have you thought about using your breakdancing skills to fight?" Minato asked.

"Uhhh, what?" Ayumu couldn't help but be confused, raising an eyebrow. "I'm mostly confident in my skills, but how the hell do you fight with dancing?"

"About 5 years ago I heard in Kamurocho that a high-ranking yakuza who could breakdance while fighting was spotted in the area many times," Minato said, remembering when stories and rumors were abundant from the district that had seen its share of conflicts throughout the years since it was largely yakuza territory.

"Really? In Shinjuku?" Ayumu uttered, now in deep thought. "Come to think of it, I do remember hearing guys talking about something like that in school back then. This yakuza swepted through punks with windmills and more. Would that really be efficient?"

"You're a zombie, so you have plenty of chances to find out. It can't hurt to give it a shot," Minato echoed his kouhai's words with a smile before leaving the balcony. Ayumu was left alone to ponder about his senpai's words.

"Maybe... just maybe..." The zombie closed his eyes as he tried to paint mental images of how a breakdancing style of fighting would work for him. Could he combine his dancing with his zombie abilities on top of being a Magical Garment Girl? After a few moments, revelations dawned upon him as his eyes then opened wide. "Holy shit! I got i— OWWW!"

Ayumu quickly rubbed his head, which somehow was in pain. It felt like something metal landed on top of him. He looked behind him and saw Haruna, who was holding Mystletainn. Connecting the dots,

he concluded he was hit with the blunt side of the magical chainsaw.

"We got a Megalo skulking around, Ayumu! Let's go!" She exclaimed and left before the boy could say anything.

"Wait up! At least apologize for hitting me on the head, Haruna!" Ayumu yelled, chasing after the brunette.

Naoto and Aigis managed to check into their hotel, which was located in the Chiyoda ward of Tokyo. They were stationed just within the Akihabara area. It was mainly known for its otaku presence of shops and buildings filled with video games, manga, anime, and more. The hotel was apparently a 5-star according to reviews Naoto found online and was a popular pick for visiting tourists. The room she was given was more luxurious than she expected, but she supposed all this was nothing compared to the Kirijo Group's funds. Aigis's room was right next to hers.

The reason Akihabara was chosen as a main base of operations was due to the strangely dressed girl that accompanied Minato in the saved video data. Naoto inferred that she might've been a cosplayer, and cosplayers were common in the area because of the immense otaku influence. If they stuck around long enough, they may discover her roaming the streets which could lead to their primary objective.

That being said, Naoto wasn't 100% confident that she would find Minato with ease. Tokyo was a very large part of Japan, and for all she knew he could've left by now. The amount of time between April and June wasn't anything to scoff at. Whether or not this needle in the haystack was here or somewhere else would be one of her greatest challenges yet. It would take hard work, intuition, and a bit of luck perhaps. And she was up to the task. The Kirijo Group wasn't giving up despite the overwhelming odds, and neither would she.

After she and Aigis were done settling in, they opted to comb the streets for any clues. Inquiries about the whereabouts of the mysterious silver-haired girl and Minato were made by them, and sometimes they showed passersby Minato's picture. Although,

Naoto could do without troll answers or girls saying he was cute and not much else. They really didn't have much to go on, and they had been at it for a good 4 hours.

"I knew this wasn't going to be easy," Naoto sighed, wiping the sweat off her forehead. She took a break from her efforts while finding comfort underneath a large tree's shade, still gripping onto a picture of Minato. This summer heat was proving to be another obstacle in her path.

"Do not lose hope, Shirogane-san," Aigis said, joining her in the shade. "We will find Minato in due time."

"I wouldn't be able to call myself a detective if I gave up on the first day of investigations," Naoto replied with a grin. "I do appreciate the gesture though, Aigis-san."

Aigis smiled. Looking at Naoto, she and Minato were strikingly similar in appearances. They shared the same hair and eye color. That was to be expected when learning of the relation between the two. The blonde girl couldn't help but feel a little nostalgic.

Before Naoto was hired, Mitsuru of course had done her research on the detective prince. The nickname was deceptively masking Naoto's gender. She was a female that carried herself professionally in her line of work to the point where many did not know her actual gender. Over time, she had received the title based on her success in cases and her mannerisms.

It turned out that Minato's mother was a Shirogane before marrying his father. Minato and Naoto were cousins according to official documents. While Aigis and Mitsuru did not know how close the two were, what they did know was that Minato had lived with her and their grandfather before coming to Iwatodai last year.

Knowing this, the original members of SEES were hesitant about involving a relative in Minato's disappearance. However, they concluded Naoto getting involved anyway had they not reached out to her. Sightings of the detective within Iwatodai didn't help matters much either.

The group additionally decided to keep the situation relatively personal, so there was no major assistance from Kirijo Group agents and the like outside of funds and data. Aigis and Koromaru were the two SEES exceptions that could feasibly search for Minato because the rest had school. Junpei, Yukari, and Fuuka were in their final year of high school, Ken was still in grade school, and Mitsuru and Akihiko had just begun college. Although some protested, primarily Junpei and Akihiko, Mitsuru wished for them to prioritize their studies until there was a gap in their schedules that they could utilize to seek out Minato by themselves. Aigis volunteered to have a head start in investigating since the Japanese educational system wasn't a main priority to her, while Koromaru chose to stay behind in Tatsumi Port Island until everyone else could go. In the end, should Naoto have accepted the case, she would be paired with Aigis. The rest was history.

If and when the two do find Minato, Aigis was ordered to interrogate him about what he knew and to immediately get into contact with SEES. The rest was up to the android's discretion and how Minato reacted. Next month began the remaining SEES members' summer break, and they promised to travel to Akihabara to join the search.

Deep in her Papillon Heart, Aigis knew she would find her fellow Wild Card. It was only a matter of patience and time.

"Well, I think I've rested enough," Naoto stated. "Let's resume."

"Roger!" Aigis replied, as the duo made their way down the streets of Akihabara.

She then paused, looking back towards the way they came from. For a brief instance, she could've sworn she felt a strange reading. It was almost similar to a Shadow, but at the same time it wasn't. She had never sensed anything like this before.

Not sensing the odd reading anymore, she hesitantly returned to her business. Must have been her imagination.

"A bear, a crawfish, a chicken, and lo and behold: a crocodile,"

Ayumu deadpanned.

It took a couple minutes, but he managed to find the Megalo of the day with Haruna and Minato. Like all other Megalos, the crocodile was wearing a Japanese school uniform. It had long arms and appeared to be bipedal too. While it wasn't as large as the first two Megalo the gang encountered, it was still towering over them.

"Good thing we got here before this Megalo could enter the streets," Minato remarked, looking around him. They were located barely within the Akihabara district in a back alley. Around them were dirty, pale walls and a passage that led to the main streets. Had it gotten out, it would've been a nuisance to take care of it with so many eyes on them, not to mention the memory wipe process Ayumu would have to do in an area such as this. It was fortunate that Haruna could sense where Megalos were.

"Let's take this lizard down!" Haruna hollered, pointing at their target.

The scuffle then ensued after her battle cry as the crocodile leaped into the air. It clenched both of its fists together and came careening downward. The trio were able to dodge the crocodile in time. The impact it left when it landed caused shockwaves and cracks in the ground to form.

"Whoa, this thing's got some power to it!" Ayumu noted aloud. "Don't get hit by its arms! Take cover, Haruna!"

"I'm on it, don't tell me what to do!" Haruna jumped to the top of a building, still holding her chainsaw. She really wanted to fight, but she was still unable to become a proper Magical Garment Girl. Disliking her current state, she huffed. Either way, this Megalo wasn't a big deal. Ayumu and Minato could totally handle it. And although she couldn't access all of her abilities, she was able to use less powerful magic.

"Back me up, Senpai!" Ayumu requested. "Keep it distracted while I find an opening!"

"Got it," Minato said.

He swiftly aimed his Evoker to his head and called forth Siegfried while pulling the trigger. The dragon-slaying Persona unleashed a Tempest Slash that managed to land a hit on the Megalo, causing it to cry out in pain and get angrier. It began blowing out large bubbles of acid from its mouth in every direction.

"Ugh, this Megalo's got some nasty breath," Haruna remarked, cringing.

Forced to retreat a fair distance and unable to get closer due to the volume of bubbles, Minato had Siegfried use Vorpall Blade. A multitude of slashes appeared in the air, popping the bubbles the crocodile Megalo let loose.

'I can't get any closer,' Minato mentally said to himself. He thought about switching to a different Persona but decided not to. *'If I try to use any other kind of move or Persona, we might draw in attention or cause too much damage.'*

As much as he hated to admit it, most Persona abilities and moves were too destructive. Fighting inside a populated city wasn't as simple as venturing through Tartarus or the Dark Hour where there weren't as many possible casualties.

Noticing that Minato was keeping the Megalo at bay, Haruna tossed Mystletainn to Ayumu after they locked eyes. She used her magic to temporarily bind the crocodile in place, gesturing her body as if she were hugging it. Ayumu promptly began to say the chant of a Magical Garment Girl, "*Nomobuyo, Oshi, Hashitawa, Dokeda, Gunmīcha, Dē Ribura !*"

Donning the frilly pink outfit he had a love-hate relationship with, Ayumu started gathering power as a pink aura surrounded him. It was a trick similar to charging up as a zombie, so he had no issue doing so. For a Megalo of this size and strength, he felt he didn't even need to go beyond 300%. Once he was done powering up, he dashed towards the Megalo from behind after spotting an opening Haruna made.

"It can't hurt to give it a shot." His senpai's words rang in his mind in the heat of the moment.

When he got close to the monster, he took a deep breath as his body relaxed. He may end up looking stupid with what he was about to do next, but he didn't care. It was time to see his breakdancing style in action.

"Yahoooo!" Ayumu started to literally dance around the Megalo with ease, assuming a breakdance pose and incorporating Mystletainn into his newfound style. Each time the Megalo would flail its arms at him, the teenager was able to dodge while dancing. He was very nimble and fast. The Megalo couldn't touch Ayumu at all.

'It's working!' Ayumu thought. 'Just gotta keep the momentum going!'

Using the windmill, he dealt many strong kicks to the crocodile's body as he spun around it simultaneously by continually rolling his torso. Performing windmills while moving nonstop was tricky for a normal person, but Ayumu was not normal. He had the prowess to back it up. The Megalo was taking too long to predict the Magical Garment Girl's swift movements, and it allowed Ayumu to whack the monster in the face with Mystletainn's blunt side as if it were a hammer.

The flurry of hits in addition to Ayumu spinning around it was enough to make the Megalo see stars. Seeing an opportunity to end this, Ayumu wound up a 300%-boosted punch and smashed his foe downward. The force of the punch caused the Megalo to bounce off the ground and into the air.

"And for the finale!" He yelled.

Performing a backwards flip, Ayumu launched a bombastic kick to the crocodile's torso. And by kick, it was actually a Mystletainn Kick. The pink chainsaw cleaved through the monster in half horizontally, which effectively ended its life. Ayumu touched the ground and struck a finishing pose as the Megalo disintegrated into motes of light behind him. It gave his performance an extra amount of flair to it.

'Nailed it!' Ayumu thought to himself proudly, letting himself grin from how successful the test run was. He would need more practice obviously, but he was confident he could utilize more breakdancing

techniques while fighting. As long as his opponents were not too big or small, he could see this style of combat being handy from now on.

"Not bad, Ayumu," Minato complimented, having witnessed the whole thing. He had already dismissed Siegfried to the sea of his soul. "I didn't think you'd take my advice to heart so quickly."

Ayumu shook his head. "I think I needed a push in the right direction. Weird as it sounds, breakdancing is a good fit for me in more ways than one. I like dancing. Makes me feel unique. And if it can help me protect people, then that's just an added bonus. So thanks for the suggestion earlier, Senpai."

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Temperance Arcana..."

"Gotta admit, Ayumu, that was pretty sweet," Haruna congratulated, approaching the two boys with her hands casually behind her head. "Although, I'm sure I can be just as cool if I could become a Magical Garment Girl again."

"If you need a dance instructor, just say so," Ayumu casually offered. He transformed into his normal clothes and gave Haruna her signature weapon back.

"Don't get too cocky. Once I'm at full power again, just you wait!" Haruna promised. "Now let's head back! My belly needs food!"

The three laughed and then went on their way with their task accomplished. Haruna asked Ayumu about how he was able to pull off all his moves as they walked with Minato behind them. The blue-haired zombie realized he hadn't seen Sera for a few hours, so he thought he should check if she came back home yet.

Nighttime

They returned to the Aikawa residence just after the sun had set. Their usual dinner time was soon, so Ayumu went to the kitchen to

get a start on making everybody food. It was his turn to cook tonight anyway. Haruna said that she wanted to relax in her room before then, so they let her do that. Eucliwood was in her typical spot in the living room, watching TV and sipping tea.

The only person left unaccounted for was Seraphim. If she wasn't with Eucliwood, then that meant she was still out of the house or in her room. Or rather, her and Minato's room. It was convenient that the room had enough space for two people, and Minato didn't have too many possessions to begin with so Sera used the extra space for her belongings. The blue-haired boy thought it wouldn't hurt to see if she was inside their room and walked in.

Sure enough, he found the vampire ninja in their room sitting in front of their bed. Yet for some reason, she looked rather weak. Her face was red and her head was swaying like she was dizzy.

"M... Minato..." Sera mumbled.

"Are you okay, Sera?" Raising an eyebrow, he approached the ninja.

"I need blood..." She said.

"Excuse me?" He placed his hand on her forehead to see if she had a fever. She sounded delirious.

"We vampire ninjas have to drink blood periodically or we'll die..." Sera admitted. "It keeps us strong and healthy."

"Ah, gotcha," Minato agreed and nodded. How could he forget? After all, it was in the name. "Can it be anybody's blood? If so, why not drink mine?"

Sera hesitated. "I wouldn't want to impose. I could just ask for Haruna's..."

"I'm already here. I can't just leave you hanging," Minato countered. His mind was already made up as he sat beside her. "Just do what you have to do."

She sighed. She should've expected that response.

"Very well. I'll take your blood. It will be over in a moment..." The vampire ninja assured and placed both of her hands on his face. She then leaned in and proceeded to kiss him.

Minato wasn't sure if this had anything to do with the process of vampire ninjas getting blood, but he said nothing and let her continue. He could confirm that she was a good kisser at least.

She stopped locking lips with him a few short moments later. For some reason, he began to feel like he had taken some medicine that made him feel loopy. His face felt hot, and he wasn't sure if it was because of him getting excited in the heat of the moment or whatever was happening to his body.

Sera's eyes assumed the color of red as she eyed Minato's neck. Slowly, she bit into it. Minato's eyes widened slightly. He was startled by how deep her teeth sank in as he let out a small grunt, yet it also didn't hurt as much as he thought it would. Sera persisted to drink his blood until she was satisfied.

The zombie rubbed the area of his neck where he got bitten. That was certainly something. He could now mark getting his blood sucked by a vampire off a hypothetical to-do list of supernatural events after dying.

"Not that I'm complaining, but was the kissing a part of the procedure?" Minato wondered.

"A kiss from vampire ninjas can be utilized as an anesthetic," Sera explained. "It dulls pain, which is useful for when we need to drink blood."

Minato nodded. "Makes sense. I can see why you were considering Haruna. Vampire ninja laws don't apply if you're going to anesthetize someone of the same gender."

"That's right. Before meeting you, I would obtain blood from other females. I could just not anesthetize anyone and go for their necks only, however it is strictly against vampire ninja morals to do so," Sera elaborated. Blushing, she then asked, "If I require blood in the future... would you mind doing this again with me?"

"Nope. Since we're married now, you can kiss me as much as you want when you need blood," Minato replied with a faint smile.

Seraphim was taken aback by how smoothly he delivered that line. It sounded so natural coming from him. She briefly felt her heartbeats speed up.

Regaining her composure, she offered her gratitude to him with a "Thank you" and gentle smile.

"*Nomobuyo, Oshi, Hashitawa, Dokeda, Gunmīcha, Dē Ribura !*" Haruna chanted. She was having another crack at transforming into a Magical Garment Girl with Mystletainn in her room.

Yet again, she was able to wear her outfit and it barely lasted more than 5 seconds before she was left with no clothes on. She looked at her trusty chainsaw sadly and sighed. This was frustrating her. She was able to use other magics here and there, but she still couldn't become a complete Magical Garment Girl.

A knock came from her door, which made her yelp as she frantically looked towards the entrance to her room.

"Haruna, you in there?" She heard Minato's voice through her door.

"Don't come in, Blue! I'm, uh, not here right now!" The brunette mentally berated herself after saying that. There was no way Minato was going to fall for that.

From the other side of her door, the blue-haired boy was understandably puzzled.

"Something wrong?" He asked.

What he got in return was silence. Maybe she was in the middle of doing something? Whatever it was, he knew better than to enter a girl's room without her permission. So he chose to leave her be.

"Ayumu is almost done with dinner. Just wanted to let you know," Minato informed his housemate. He turned around and was about to

head downstairs but was stopped when he heard a door creak open.

"Hey... Minato?" Haruna asked, looking dejected and dressed. He noticed she wasn't using his nickname for once. She motioned for him to come into her room and he did just that. Mystletainn was placed by her closet. The two then sat on the brunette's bed next to each other. He waited for her to speak up about what was on her mind.

"I still can't become a Magical Garment Girl. Without my powers, I can't go back to Villiers or even fight Megalos. And without them, what am I good for?"

Minato was able to quickly figure out what was going on and tried reassure her. "You'll be back to your old self in no time."

"There's more," Haruna interjected. "When I'm not a Magical Garment Girl, I become so scared from sensing a Megalo's strength. I feel so helpless. I hate that feeling. Why is this happening to me?"

Not able to hold back her emotions any longer, she buried herself in Minato's chest and started to cry.

"I'm so embarrassed... I'm so weak! So stupid! A failure!" She wailed.

Minato patted her head as she released her pent-up feelings. He sympathized with the young girl. This reminded him of instances from the past, when his friends experienced that same feeling of powerlessness throughout 2009. Even he had been in that position.

He didn't have the answer as to why she currently couldn't turn into a Magical Garment Girl, but if his background taught him anything it was that anything can change.

"Me and my friends from SEES had our share of times when we felt like we were powerless to prevent bad things from happening," Minato spoke gently. "But it was after we opened our hearts that made us closer and stronger. Despite the obstacles in our path, we ended up saving the world. We made the impossible possible. You too will become stronger after this, Haruna. Don't give up."

The bluenette tried his best to console Haruna. Speaking from the heart as of late typically resulted in good outcomes, he believed. He had sort of gotten used to it. It was a nice feeling.

His words seemed to have helped as Haruna's breathing stabilized and her sniffles were winding down.

"Thou shalt have our blessing twice more when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Chariot Arcana..."

Dinner was over before Ayumu knew it. Gaia gifted him another peaceful intermission that he didn't know he needed. He had to admit, things had been getting crazier lately. His second encounter with the Tokyo serial killer, him killing a Megalo by breakdancing, getting Eucliwood to open up, and Minato and Seraphim becoming a married couple stuck out to him the most.

It never ceased to amaze him just how chaotic, yet refreshing his life had become.

All three girls went to take a bath with each other. Girl stuff, basically. That just left Ayumu and Minato, both of whom decided to clean the dishes. They didn't mind the labor, as it was a relaxing chore for them.

It was kind of hard, though, to not eavesdrop on the girls having fun together in the bathroom since they were being loud.

Normally Ayumu would have perverse thoughts in times like this, but he remembered that one of the girls in this house was Minato's wife. Even he was aware of where to draw the line. That being said, he still thought about Eu in moe scenarios. She was just so cute.

"Could you hand me the dish soap, Senpai? My sponge is almost out of suds," Ayumu asked.

"Mm, I'm just about finished on my end." Minato handed over the soap. With his portion of dishes all squeaky clean, he took a moment to stretch his body. It was immediately after that when the two heard Ayumu's cell phone ringing in the living room.

"Now who could be calling me this late?" Ayumu wondered. "Sorry, Minato, but can you answer that for me?"

Giving his kouhai a thumbs-up, the Persona-user went over and picked up Ayumu's phone. He quickly noticed that there was no caller ID.

"It's a withheld number," Minato told Ayumu.

"Put it on speaker," Ayumu said, drying his hands once he finished his dishes. He was curious about who this caller was. The older boy nodded and hit the speaker option on the phone then returned it to Ayumu. "Hello?"

"How odd, you don't sound anything like Haruna," a feminine voice said on the other line.

Minato interjected, "Haruna? Are you the head teacher at Villiers?"

"Indeed I am, second stranger," the voice confirmed. "May I ask who I am speaking to?"

"Arisato Minato," Minato introduced himself.

"And I'm Aikawa Ayumu. I'm also the guy who took Haruna's place as a Magical Garment Girl," said Ayumu.

"This is strange," the head teacher of Villiers sounded bemused. "You're not a girl, are you, Ayumu?"

"I've come to accept that it's best just to go along with it, no matter how ridiculous the premise may sound," the gray-haired zombie sighed.

"Did you want to talk to Haruna? She's kind of busy right now," Minato mentioned. "We can give her a message for you."

"Um... yes, that would work splendidly," Haruna's teacher said. "Please tell her I don't need the Kyotofu anymore."

"Kyotofu?" Ayumu looked at Minato to see if he knew what she was talking about but was met with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Yup. I sent Haruna on an errand to fetch me it. Considering how long it's been since she left Villiers, she must've not had any luck locating it. But that's alright, I've decided to give up on the Kyotofu," the head teacher elaborated.

"Didn't Haruna say she wanted to pick something up yesterday for the head teacher?" Minato asked out loud.

"Ohhh, now I get it," Ayumu facepalmed, putting the pieces together. "Toejam, my ass. Of all the things she mixed it up with, it was tofu."

"I simply love the tofu from Kyoto!" The head teacher said joyfully. "It's the best I've ever tasted!"

"That reminds me, I did try Kyoto tofu before. It's pretty good," Minato added, remembering his school trip to Kyoto last November where he had the chance to eat the local delicacy.

"Isn't it?!" She gushed.

"Huh. Small world," Ayumu noted. "Anyway, head teacher, I might be able to get some Kyotofu for you."

"Really? Aw, thank you so much!"

"It's no problem. I know a few people who can help with that. But why is Haruna here in Tokyo if she had to get tofu from Kyoto?" Ayumu couldn't help but ask. Minato thought it was odd too.

"Wait, are you saying that you two aren't in Kyoto?" The head teacher was surprised to hear that. "That's a shame. I thought I specifically told her to go to Kyoto for the tofu."

"Sounds like tofu wasn't the only thing she mixed up," Minato lightly laughed, making Ayumu snicker with him.

"You can't get Kyotofu in Tokyo, because tofu in Tokyo would be Totofu," Ayumu added.

"Hehe, I suppose so," the female instructor giggled as well.

"I have a suggestion. If you can connect to Ayumu's phone, then you

could call a delivery service and order your tofu from there," Minato advised.

"That's an excellent idea! But unfortunately I don't believe I can do that because I already maxed out my credit card buying Kyoto tofu before. Oopsie," the head teacher admitted casually.

Ayumu sweatdropped. Not what he expected from the person in charge of teaching Magical Garment Girls quite frankly.

"In that case, how about I give you the tofu in person?" Ayumu offered. "I can have it ready for you by tomorrow."

"Truly? Wonderful! Let's see... I can pick it up around 9 PM tomorrow in your time then," she stated. "Thank you for being so sweet. And for taking good care of Haruna. She's always had trouble remembering people and things."

"Oh?" Ayumu found himself curious to know more about the brunette.

"When it comes to magic, she certainly is a genius. However, her biggest flaw is being a little self-centered, if you two know what I mean. She doesn't put a lot of effort into memorizing," she explained.

That pretty much summed up Haruna in a nutshell. She definitely had quite the ego.

"Ah! Actually, something unexpected did happen recently," the head teacher claimed. "It took me greatly by surprise, but she remembered the names of two people!"

Minato placed a hand on his hip and thought to himself. She said two people. He wondered if she meant—

"Yo, Minato! Ayumu!" Suddenly, Haruna entered the living room, wearing only a bath towel wrapped around her torso. "Hang up the phone and break out the ice cream!"

"What the— Haruna! You gotta stop doing that! Put on some clothes already! Your head teacher is on the phone right now!" Ayumu

shouted at the brunette. Since his cell phone was still in speaker mode, Haruna's head teacher was able to overhear.

"Oh, uhhh, I'm busy!" Haruna stammered, unable to come up with a good excuse.

"She can hear you, you know," Minato stated dryly.

"Crap," muttered Ayumu as he turned off the speaker mode.

"Traitor! Don't sell me out, Blue!" The brunette pointed at him as she yelled. "Just tell her I'm not available right now!"

Seraphim then entered the room with Eucliwood. They both just finished drying off from their bath and were in their night clothes.

"What's all the commotion about?" The swordswoman asked.

"Well you see..." Minato began bringing his wife and Eu up to speed.

While he was busy talking to the two girls and Haruna ran to the kitchen for ice cream, Ayumu was left alone to talk to the head teacher.

"Er, sorry about that," he apologized. "You still there, head teacher?"

"I sure am," the instructor replied.

"Good. I've picked out the meeting place for tomorrow."

"I understand. Then that's where we'll meet. I'll see you tomorrow, Mr. Aikawa."

That was positively an eventful phone call. Despite communicating from another world, the head teacher could tell over the phone that her student seemed content with where she was now. Perhaps it was a good thing Haruna found herself in Tokyo instead of Kyoto.

She smiled warmly.

"Those two boys possess a very unique kind of magic, do they not,

Ariel?" An entity approached the instructor.

The head teacher's real name was Ariel. She sported white hair with pigtails and had golden eyes. She looked the part of a teacher also as she dressed up like one.

"Very unique indeed," Ariel affirmed. "Although I shouldn't be too shocked, considering one of them is the Messiah. Now be a dear and share one of your pudding cups with me, Elizabeth."

Clad in Velvet Room attire from her previous occupation, Elizabeth gave the head teacher what she asked for as they both ate together.

"They are delectable, aren't they? Truly worth purchasing every single one I could find on Earth."

The Next Day

Nighttime

Ayumu hummed to himself as he waited patiently for Haruna's head teacher. He ended up selecting the graveyard where he first met the brunette for the meeting spot. Yes, he can admit it was a peculiar choice. He just didn't want to risk the Villiers instructor to fall from the sky like her student did should that be her entrance, so he opted for a secluded area.

Not only that, but he personally enjoyed the ambiance in this graveyard whenever he visited.

The Kyoto tofu he promised was with him in a plastic bag. He picked it up prior to coming here.

"I'll never understand those girls. Thank God I'm not the only guy in that home or I might have gone nuts," Ayumu mused to himself. He was referring to earlier in the evening when he was about to head out after finishing dinner with his housemates. Getting and giving tofu was a simple enough errand, so he thought he would just go

alone.

Eucliwood didn't seem to want to let Ayumu go outside tonight, though. But he assured his master that he would come straight home after delivering the tofu. He chalked it up to the serial killer still on the prowl.

He did ask Haruna if she wanted to tag along since he was meeting her teacher. What he got was a no from the short girl, so he assumed she would stay home. Then he discovered that she had been tailing him sometime after he left the house and called her out on it, which netted him more rejections of his claims and name-calling before she scurried off to the convenience store.

'She's a stubborn one all right,' he noted with a smile.

He surveyed around him to see if the head teacher had arrived yet. Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted somebody standing behind a large sign.

'Must be her. I suppose only zombies and Magical Garment Girls would meet in graveyards this late,' Ayumu mused as he got up and walked towards the individual. Once got closer, he noticed this person was female, having twintails and appearing youthful. She looked older than Haruna too. "Is that you, head teacher? I got the Kyotofu you asked..."

Ayumu trailed off after reaching the other side of the sign.

Nobody was there.

"...for."

In the blink of an eye, a loud noise suddenly came from behind the teenager. It sounded like metal bouncing off a wall just as durable.

Whipping around, Ayumu dropped his tofu and quickly noticed the same girl that he believed he saw a second ago. For some reason, there was a barrier of sorts between her and Ayumu. She was blown backwards by a few feet, probably thanks to this unknown barrier.

What immediately drew Ayumu's attention was what the girl was

holding with her hands. There was a sheathe in one hand. And in the other was a sword, but not just any normal one.

He recognized that blade anywhere. It was the very same one that he was impaled by in the past twice.

"Grr, what the hell is this?!" The girl angrily shouted. "Who's the jackass that decided to cast a barrier?!"

She was blonde and her eyes were yellow. Her clothes were like Haruna's Magical Garment Girl outfit. The main difference was that it was a red and white version of it. It had none of the bright colors which Ayumu was used to seeing.

He never thought he would meet an evil magical girl.

"You... Now I get it. You're the damn serial killer that killed me!" Ayumu seethed.

"Hmph. The pleasure is all mine, Aikawa Ayumu," she taunted with smugness laced in her tone. "You may call me Kyoko. Although, it won't matter if you know my name or not after I finally erase you off the face of this world."

A rush of emotions and adrenaline welled within Ayumu. If it weren't for his previous encounters with this girl, he might've blindly charged in. She was bad news. After getting a read on the situation and assessing that she was a Magical Garment Girl, he prepared himself for an unavoidable battle.

"We'll see about that!" Ayumu challenged.

"It's time for you to meet your demise!" Kyoko rushed forward and relentlessly unleashed a barrage of rapid slashes with her sword and sheathe. Ayumu was able to elude her attacks, bending and twisting his body in ways he thought weren't possible for him. But moving around in this graveyard without tripping was proving to be problematic for him. The blonde Magical Garment Girl then landed a kick to Ayumu so strong it knocked the wind out of him and sent him flying a couple of feet away.

Panting, Ayumu stood up as fast as he could. His eyes shot

upwards as he saw Kyoko lunging at him.

"I've killed you twice already, so why don't you just give up and die!" She continued her assault with another set of slashes. Ayumu dodged as much as he possibly could, but even he was aware he couldn't keep this up forever. "Your existence is a plague that will ruin everything I've worked so hard to accomplish!"

"Shit, she's real good," Ayumu growled. Kyoko charged up a ball of energy, and the gray-haired zombie saw an opportunity to make a mad dash, making her attack miss its target.

"Until you showed up, I was gathering souls so smoothly!" She shrilled as she hopped among gravestones while giving chase. "That dog Megalo didn't make things easier for me either!"

The boy stopped in his tracks once he heard that and gritted his teeth. "You killed Kerberos too?! You fucking bitch!"

"Hahaha! See if you can dodge this, Ayumu!" Kyoko guffawed and charged up another energy ball, taking advantage of Ayumu's temper.

Realizing his mistake, Ayumu tried to make a run for it again but was surrounded by lanes of gravestones on his left and right sides. Just when Kyoko's energy ball was about to make contact with the zombie, a barrier appeared once more around him and reflected the oncoming attack.

"Not again!" She exclaimed in irritation, followed by being caught off guard and getting hit with her own attack.

"The hell?" Ayumu muttered. A barrier again? He examined Kyoko, and it appeared that she was struggling to move. It seemed like her energy balls can cease body movements, which would explain Ayumu's lack of in the past when he was stabbed twice by the Magical Garment Girl.

He would soon be surprised from hearing another voice near him.

"Hey, Ayumu! Did you deliver the toejam to the head teacher or what?"

"Forget about the tofu, Haruna!" Ayumu proclaimed, immediately realizing whose voice that belonged to. Honestly though, he was very glad she came now.

The next moment, a breeze brought forth a large number of leaves. That could only mean one thing to Ayumu.

"Perv. Did you prey upon this young girl and not think she would retaliate? Absolutely disgusting."

'I don't even care if I just got called that. I'm so glad to see you, Sera!' Ayumu cheered mentally. The vampire ninja that he knew appeared and was holding Mystletainn.

Not long after that, Ayumu then saw a familiar mop of blue hair from a different direction.

"Yo. Are we late to the party, Ayumu?"

"Heh. Just in time, Minato-senpai," he snorted but then raised an eyebrow. "But why are you all here?"

"You have Lady Hellscythe to thank," Seraphim explained, giving Mystletainn to Ayumu. "She had a feeling extra assistance was mandatory in the event you were in over your head."

"Eu also asked me to cast two barriers on you with my Personas before you left the house," Minato chimed in, referring to the Persona skills Tetrakarn and Makarakarn. "One for physical attacks, and another for magical ones."

"Wow, talk about handy," Ayumu responded with widened eyes. "Those barriers saved my ass."

"So you're the asshole that set them up," Kyoko cursed. She was free from the effects of her magic and held her weapons at her side.

"Our enemy isn't human, is she?" Sera asked.

Ayumu shook his head. "No. She's a Magical Garment Girl that's a monster in human clothing."

"Oh, is that a fact? Then how very unfortunate for her," the ninja stated.

"We can end this finally," Minato said. He felt his chest tighten for some reason after his gaze focused on Kyoko, but shrugged it off as adrenaline from confronting the serial killer at long last.

"Time to kick her ass!" Haruna announced.

Kyoko smirked upon seeing the brunette. "It's been a while, Haruna. Have you finally become a decent Magical Garment Girl, considering you were held back for a year?"

"I don't know you, skank!" The short girl replied genuinely. Ayumu and Minato believed that she most likely forgot about Kyoko after recalling what the head teacher said last night.

"Tch. Still unbearable and a pain in the ass, I see," Kyoko spat out in disgust.

Another gust of leaves arrived and formed Sera's signature weapon.

"Enough talk. I can't stand vile lowlifes who murder innocent people," she stated coldly. Her green eyes altered to red, showing she was ready to fight with everyone.

"Heh, those eyes... We're not so different, you and I," Kyoko said, which confused the group because she didn't have red eyes. A moment after, her eyes did indeed become red and she even donned a cloak reminiscent of the one Sera wore a while back.

"Is she like you, Sera?" Minato asked.

The vampire ninja shook her head. "She is no vampire ninja, yet I do detect another power in her."

"Wow, four against one, huh? Not really fair if you ask me," Kyoko remarked with an amused grin.

"Oh, shut up! You stabbed me in the back! Twice!" Ayumu countered, raising two of his fingers for further emphasis.

Followed by that outburst, Seraphim hastily went on the offensive.

"Swallow Return Strike!" Shouting her favorite phrase, the vampire ninja let loose a red crescent energy blast. The twisted Magical Garment Girl merely stood in her current position and raised her sword in front of her. Sera's attack bounced off Kyoko's weapon like it was nothing.

"Please. Tell me that's not all you can muster," Kyoko mocked. Pointing her sword at Sera, she charged a fireball and fired it. "Since you showed me yours, let me show you mine!"

"Sera!"

Sera would've been blown back by the attack had it not been for Minato jumping in front of her and taking the blast head-on.

"Minato!" She exclaimed.

The smoke cleared and revealed that the blue-haired teenager didn't have so much as a scratch on him.

"It's okay," he assured with a thumbs-up.

Kyoko clicked her tongue.

"What are you?" Her magic didn't even faze this guy. He was capable of setting up barriers that reflected her attacks and could nullify them by not doing anything? She could feel a vein popping in her head.

"Just a teenager," Minato stated matter-of-factly.

"A fool, huh? Fine. Fire isn't all I have, you know." She conjured up wind that immediately enveloped the area as mist. The gang braced themselves, yet they didn't feel hurt.

Haruna, however, felt weak in her knees and slumped to the ground.

"What's wrong?!" Ayumu asked her.

"My magic is gone! Sheesh, this sucks," Haruna complained.

"What's up with this chick? Her power is as intense as a Megalo's!"

"That certainly didn't help much, but at least one player is out of the game now," Kyoko said snidely. She then noticed Minato reaching in his pocket and pulling out a gun. A weapon such as that was fruitless against her, so she wondered what he was planning. It slightly shocked her when she saw him aim at his head. "Oh? Are you going to commit suicide after witnessing my power? Go ahead! It will make for an entertaining diversion before I slaughter your friends."

"You want death?" Minato asked, annoyed. "I'll show you Death."

Kyoko wasn't normally somebody who was afraid. She was too proud of herself. Her terrorizing Tokyo and swiping souls for so long boosted her clout. She let herself watch Minato in morbid fascination, awaiting blood to spill.

But seeing a large entity with dark clothing and a skull-like helmet that wielded a blade almost its size suddenly showing up behind the blue-haired boy with a cloak of coffins took her by surprise for sure. Not to mention the male in question wasn't dead at all. There was no blood after he pulled the trigger. Only two pairs of gazes staring back at her.

"What the fu—"

"Go." One word, and Thanatos charged towards Kyoko with speed that nearly caught her off guard. Had she have been a second too late, she might've been stabbed herself. She had to use both her sword and sheathe to block its attack, as she could feel the force it was exerting. Knowing she couldn't hold it back anymore, she jumped into the air and Thanatos followed suit. The sound of swords clashing multiple times echoed through the night. Thanatos definitely had the advantage in raw power, but because Kyoko was in the air she had more freedom to move around and not get pinned down.

'Who the hell is this freak?' Kyoko exclaimed inwardly, trying to fend off the Greek god of death.

Ayumu couldn't help but observe how Minato's Persona was

pushing her back. At this rate they may just win this.

"Stop daydreaming, Ayumu!" Seraphim's voice snapped him out of his reverie. "Don't you think it's time to transform? With your abilities, we can tip the scales in our favor."

"Goddamn it. I was hoping to not do that," Ayumu grunted. He hated that she was right.

"I won't allow my husband to fight alone!" She shouted at him. "Now go!"

Wielding Mystletainn, Ayumu steeled himself. "When it came time to avenge my own death, I wanted to avoid dressing up like a girl. But it looks like I have no other options! *Nomobuyo, Oshi, Hashitawa, Dokeda, Gunmīcha, Dē Ribura !*"

Once more, the zombie was clothed as a Magical Garment Girl after saying the magic words.

Sera had to force herself to choke back her disgust.

"A part of my soul dies every time I see you dressed like that."

"Totally looking like a pervert," Haruna added with an uncomfortable look.

"Guys, for real?!" Ayumu was exasperated. He really disliked doing this. "Oh to hell with it. Let's do this already!"

Ayumu and Sera dashed forward and past Minato before they split up, taking different sides to surround Kyoko. She was still having her hands full with Thanatos. Noticing the formation, Minato had his Persona push the evil Magical Garment Girl downward.

Seeing his chance, Ayumu lunged at Kyoko. The latter was forced to utilize her sheathe to defend herself from being sawed by Mystletainn while keeping Thanatos barely at bay with her sword. Her sheathe was more durable than he thought, but that didn't stop him as sparks flew from their clashing.

"Ugh. You're so nauseating to look at, you zombie piece of shit,"

Kyoko insulted with narrowed eyes.

"I don't give a damn," Ayumu sternly answered. "Answer me, why did you decide to kill all those people?"

She smirked. "If you learned that you could achieve immortality by killing others, you'd do the same, wouldn't you?"

"Like hell I would! I'm not a psychopath like you!" He screamed angrily as he started glowing pink.

"He's getting cuter!" Haruna exclaimed.

Every time a Magical Garment Girl's power increased, their clothes become frillier and more adorned. It looked ridiculous, but Ayumu could care less. Flowers began sprouting all over his body.

He was going further beyond his normal limits with over 500% power.

"Haaaaaaaaa!" Ayumu yelled, applying more force to his assault. The sudden surge in strength was enough to disarm Kyoko of her sheathe as it got knocked aside. With her partially exposed, the boy then used a full nelson, which meant grappling her from behind with both of his arms.

"Let go of me, pervert!" Kyoko shrieked, unable to use her sword to ward him off.

"Not a chance!" Ayumu said. "NOW!"

From the other side of the graveyard, Sera flew towards the unprotected blonde, readying her leaf blade. At the same time, Thanatos readied its sword as well.

"Swallow Return Strike!"

"Do it, Thanatos!" Minato ordered.

The next thing Kyoko knew, she was stabbed in two different parts of her body as Thanatos and Sera's weapons went through her and Ayumu. Fortunately for Ayumu, he was a zombie that could take the

injuries and regenerate. Her piercing red eyes faded back to their normal yellow which then lost their light.

She was dead.

"Overkill, but I'm not complaining," Ayumu remarked with a relieved sigh. The blades in his body were pulled out, leaving him standing and Kyoko's corpse on the ground to bleed out. He returned to his normal, non-magical, state shortly after. Thanatos went back to Minato as he put away his Evoker and Sera dispersed her sword.

"Got to admit, that was some good teamwork," Minato said.

"Heh, it helps that we have a natural leader with us," Ayumu noted. His senpai's Persona provided an opportunity for this battle to end quicker than it possibly should've. He didn't even want to imagine what it'd be like if it was dragged out, though.

"Agreed. Everybody did well," Sera complimented too.

"Nice job, team!" Haruna added. "That skank is now off our backs!"

"Thou shalt have our blessing when thou choosest to create a Persona of the Fool Arcana..."

"God, I am beat!" Ayumu stretched his back. His stab wounds were gone now, so he took the moment to adjust his body. He felt like a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders. It was over. "What do you guys say to some celebratory ice cream?"

"Don't mind if I do," Minato replied, smiling. Ice cream did sound nice right about now.

"Bring out the tubs!" Haruna eagerly cheered.

Sera nodded in agreement.

"Let's go ho—"

It happened before they could blink. Time slowed down to a crawl.

Just when Seraphim was about to finish her sentence, she abruptly

fell forward and coughed up blood onto her husband. On instinct, Minato immediately caught her before she could fall to the ground and held her body. His hand felt warm blood from her back.

The vampire ninja went limp in his embrace.

"Sera...?" Minato stared in horror as his eyes widened. She did not respond back.

A feeling of dread engulfed him.

No.

No. No.

No. No. No.

This couldn't be happening to him. Looking at the ninja right now caused memories to resurface.

Memories of Aragaki Shinjiro dying as he bled out from a fatal gunshot wound that was caused by Takaya of Strega.

Memories of Kirijo Takeharu dying in Mitsuru's arms after being shot by that traitorous Ikutsuki.

Memories of Yoshino Chidori dying once she revived Junpei with her own life essence when the latter was shot by Takaya as well.

Memories of Aigis being severely damaged and almost ceasing to function when she confronted Ryoji.

Memories of that fateful day in 1999, when his parents lay dead in front of him from the result of the Dark Hour in a burning car wreck.

He remembered the anguished screams.

He failed to protect those he cared for back then. He failed to protect Seraphim.

Not again.

"Did you honestly think that would be enough to kill me?" A familiar,

haughty voice asked.

Ayumu and Haruna widened their eyes and both saw Kyoko, standing and looking no worse for wear. Her blade was dripping blood.

"Oh, shit! You can't be a zombie too!?" Ayumu panicked. How in the world was she still alive?

Kyoko got a kick out of witnessing the surprised looks on their faces.

"No, but I may as well be with the ten lives I have left. After those are gone, then I can actually die," she informed them. A scowl formed when her eyes fell upon Sera. "If it weren't for that bitch, I would've taken out the biggest nuisance here. But I'm confident I can still kill you all with my remaining lives."

Ayumu gritted his teeth. "Damn you!"

Minato wasn't able hear what they were saying. To him, the world was silent ever since Kyoko cut down Seraphim.

The one thing he did hear was a voice inside him.

"Go on. Make her suffer."

Almost robotically, he laid Sera onto the ground gently and stood up.

When he had the blonde Magical Garment Girl in his sight, he could only see red.

He felt a tight sensation in his chest as he placed his hands on it. What was happening? It was like something inside him was about to burst. It burned. It made his body pulsate. However, a single thought persisted in his mind in spite of it all.

He only cared about seeing Kyoko lie dead at his feet.

All of a sudden, a violent and pitch black aura erupted around him as he then cried out towards the heavens beneath a full moon.

"Graaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"Th-the hell...?!" Ayumu was caught off guard. He had never seen his senpai act this way before, let alone scream so vehemently.

"M-Minato?" Haruna timidly said. Her body started to tremble. Her senses were screaming. They were telling her that something was not right.

'What in the world?! He's becoming even more powerful!' Kyoko broke out in a cold sweat. She was able to sense what Haruna was sensing too. In the back of her mind, she was beginning to regret attacking the vampire ninja. What did she just do?

Calm blue hair became black. Mysterious golden eyes were replaced by red.

Minato stopped screaming. His normally composed face was now sporting a vicious glare. He was still enveloped by a black aura.

"S-Senpai...?" Ayumu called carefully.

If Minato heard Ayumu, he didn't give him a response. The Persona-user seemed to be solely fixated on their enemy.

"Haaaaaaaaa!" The boy roared with ferocity. His voice too had changed, sounding rather distorted. It simply made him sound more primal.

By the time Kyoko could even process what was transpiring, the next thing she knew Minato had closed the distance between them in an instant and delivered a deadly punch to her jaw. There was a sickening crunch sound Ayumu and Haruna heard from where they were standing which made them wince.

And just like that, Kyoko had already lost another one of her lives as the force of Minato's blow managed to break her neck. Her body was flung across the graveyard, smashing into several gravestones before coming to a complete stop. Her life count was down to nine now.

As much as Haruna disliked her fellow Magical Garment Girl, she gasped at how brutal her friend was. It wasn't even the funny kind of brutal. It was pure rage she was witnessing.

Ayumu was just as apprehensive. Should he let his senpai mow down Kyoko's remaining lives or calm him down? He was at a loss about what to do.

"Ayumu? I'm scared..." Haruna admitted to him. The younger zombie pulled her in to hug and comfort her.

"Me too, Haruna..."

His mind then flashed back to the night he had his heart-to-heart with Eucliwood.

[My power is a curse I can't discard. Because of it, I can't forgive myself for what I did to Minato.]

'I don't know exactly what is going on, but I really wish she were here right now!' Ayumu fretted. He believed having the necromancer here would be a major boon. He didn't know the full extent of her powers as he had never seen them in action aside from healing. Maybe she could help Minato snap out of it?

Minato eyed Kyoko's body, waiting to see when her next life would activate. Slowly, her neck snapped back into place as she tried to get up. She vomited blood while doing so.

If there was any shred of mercy left in Minato's soul, it was gone because he did not wait for her to even stand up.

Not yet.

He was not finished yet.

Not until he made her suffer for her crimes.

A pair of green eyes slowly opened. Seraphim placed a hand on her head. It was ringing with sounds and senses overlapping each other. What happened to her? The last thing she remembered was that she was about to go home with everyone after killing the renegade Magical Garment Girl.

"Ngh!" She winced in pain when she attempted to sit up. Her back hurt for some reason.

"Sera! You're okay!" Ayumu exclaimed in relief.

"What... happened?" Sera weakly asked him while noticing him and Haruna looking distraught.

"Raaaaaaaaaaaaagh!" A feral scream interrupted them.

Bewildered, her eyes darted around the graveyard to locate the source. The vampire ninja's eyes widened when she found it.

"Is... is that, Minato...?" She hesitantly inquired. He was different. She almost didn't recognize him without his trademark blue hair or gold eyes. He was radiating vast amounts of power, but it all felt... negative and dark.

"Kyoko's not dead yet!" Ayumu relayed to her. "She still has many lives left from the people she killed. You were hit with a sneak attack. Minato... He went berserk after that and became what you're seeing now."

Minato's black aura fluctuated and shortly after an entity came into existence from behind him. At a glance, it appeared to be one of his Personas: Orpheus. He had summoned a Persona without his Evoker.

Orpheus was visually different. Its design was black and red. Its lyre was red too, and it had small bat-like wings. Under one of its eyes was a seemingly white teardrop.

With a strum of its lyre came an explosion of fire that detonated squarely on Kyoko.

"GAAAAAAAAAAH!" She wailed in agony from being burned alive.

Sera grimaced from such cruelty. She had never seen Minato display such acts of violence before. His appearance, his movements, his actions — they were a far cry from what she had come to know from being around the Messiah.

All of this just felt... wrong.

Even though she can agree that it was in everybody's best interest that Kyoko should die permanently, she was very worried about Minato. What if he didn't revert to normal when he was finished eliminating the rest of the blonde girl's lives?

She placed a hand over her heart as she could only watch what he would do next.

Next: Chapter 7: The Song of Life

Social Links:

Fool: Rank 7

Empress (Naegleria Nebiros): Rank 2

Chariot (Haruna): Rank 6

Fortune (Seraphim): Rank 7

Death (Eucliwood Hellscythe): Rank 5

Temperance (Aikawa Ayumu): Rank 7

A/N: Almost seven months later for an update isn't all that bad, considering my track record. And just in time before I return to college.

Am I evil or what for leaving this chapter on such a cliffhanger? To be honest, I was more than ready to go beyond. The main issue lies within the pacing had I extended this chapter further. I personally thought it would've become a painful mess, so I cut this down by quite a lot.

This time, I actually don't have much to say. Better to keep you all in

suspense and wait to see the reactions, heh.

Until next time, sayonara!